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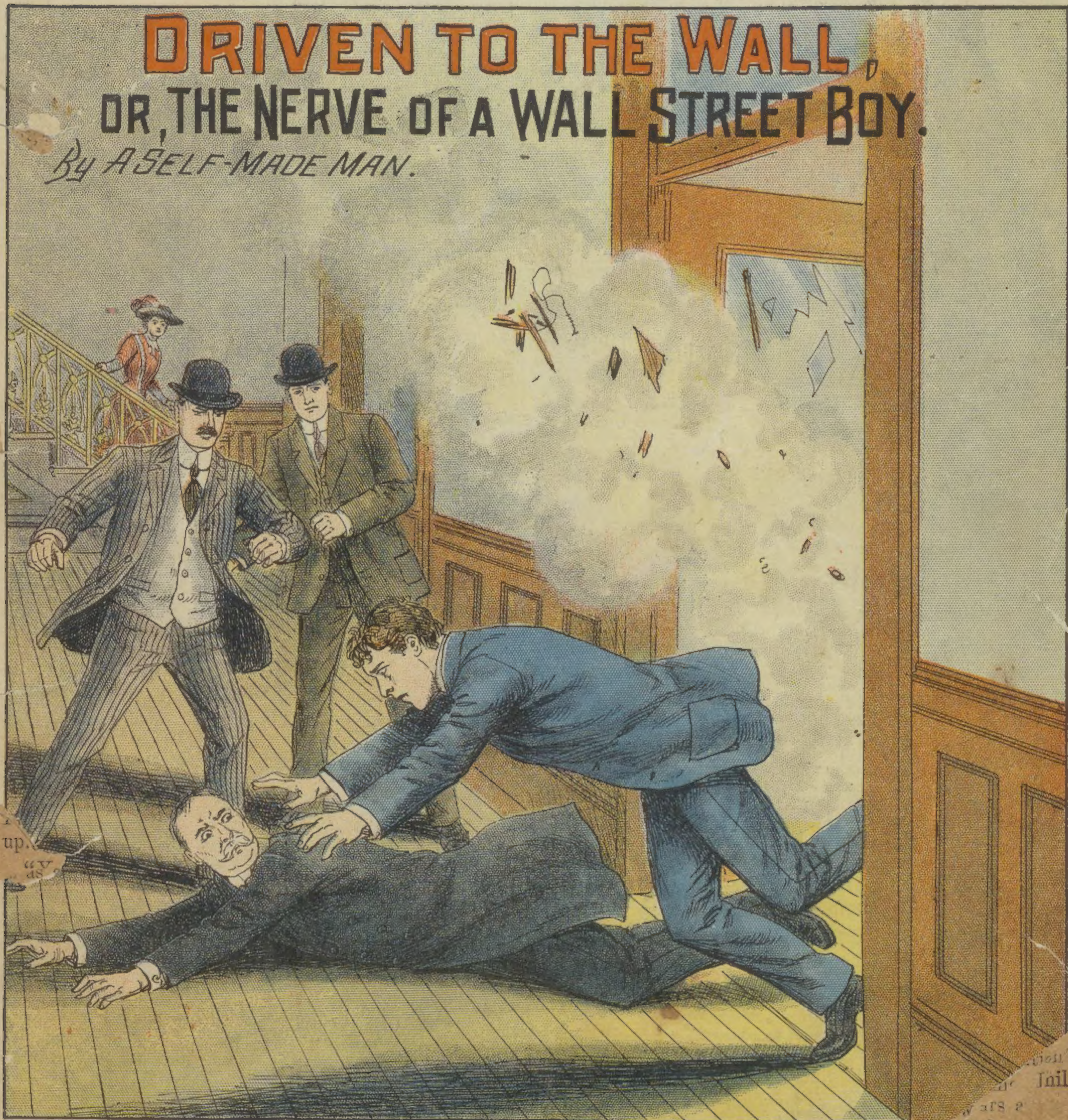
FAME AND FORTUNE

STORIES OF
BOYS

WEEKLY. WHO MAKE
MONEY.

DRIVEN TO THE WALL, OR, THE NERVE OF A WALL STREET BOY.

By A SELF-MADE MAN.



As Broker Brown shot through the door, propelled by Sid's muscular arms, the bomb exploded with a concussion that shook the building. The brave boy was sent staggering out into the corridor after the man whose life he had saved.

Fame and Fortune Weekly

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY

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NEW YORK, AUGUST 12, 1910.

PRICE 5 CENTS.

Driven to the Wall

OR,

Charles Brown The Nerve of a Wall Street Boy

By A SELF-MADE MAN

CHAPTER I.

DISCHARGED.

"So you've been speculating again, have you?" cried Broker Brown, of No. — Wall Street, glaring at his office boy and messenger.

"I can't deny it, sir," replied Sid Davenport, respectfully.

"Didn't I tell you to cut it out?"

"You did, sir."

"Then why didn't you?"

"I got hold of a tip on B. & O., and the temptation to make a haul was too strong for me to resist."

"I suppose you made the haul?" sneered the broker.

"Not yet, sir. I'm waiting for—"

"Well, you won't wait for anything in my office," snapped Mr. Brown. "I told you if I caught you monkey-up with the market again I'd discharge you. As my word is as good as my bond I shall dispense with your services at the end of this week. That's all. You can go," and the speaker turned to his desk.

As there wasn't any doubt about the broker being in earnest, Sid made no reply and turning around returned to his post in the waiting-room.

"So, I'm bounced. Well, I don't care. If Mr. Brown can get along without me I can exist without his eight bones a week," said the boy to himself.

Sid was self-reliant and independent.

While he was willing to run his shoes off his feet to serve his employer he wouldn't crawl to any man.

He always tried to do his duty, and if he made mistakes once in a while, such slips never happened through carelessness on his part.

He was a smart boy and a very capable messenger.

Many brokers had remarked the fact, and Brown had more than once congratulated himself on having such a boy in his office.

Brown, however, had his peculiarities.

The smarter Sid grew the more he expected of the boy.

As a rule the lad hit the mark, but when he happened to fall a bit shy Brown never failed to call his attention to the fact.

One day the broker learned in a roundabout way that Sid was doing a little business with the stock market on the quiet.

The idea that his messenger should break an unwritten law of Wall Street made him wroth, so he taxed Sid with his presumption, and when the boy admitted his delinquency he told him if it happened again they would part in quick order.

That mandate put a damper on Sid's speculative ambitions.

He stopped short and had no expectation of resuming.

The fever, however, was in his blood, and though Sid meant to hold the whip-hand over his tendencies to speculate, he was not equal to the test.

When the B. & O. tip came his way his good resolution proved no more stable than a foundation of shifting sand.

He yielded to the temptation, and he was now facing the consequences.

all be

He was not a squealer and could take his medicine like a major.

At any rate he had a thousand dollars up on B. & O. and he was already \$500 ahead on the deal, so he could take his bounce philosophically from a financial standpoint.

Furthermore as his father held a responsible position which enabled him to support his family in good shape, it didn't make any difference if he was not able to turn in his wages regularly to his mother.

Nevertheless his folks wouldn't stand for him being out of a job if they became aware of the fact, and his father was sure to demand an explanation of the cause of his discharge.

"I'll keep the matter quiet for the present," Sid told himself. "I can turn in eight dollars out of my own funds, and the folks will never be the wiser until I catch on somewhere else and I tell them about the change."

At this point in his meditations the cashier called him up and sent him out with a note to Brown's representative in the board-room.

When he reached the Exchange he saw there was considerable excitement around the B. & O. standard.

A glance at the big blackboard showed him that the price was advancing once more.

"It looks as if it'll go ten or twelve points above what I paid for it. If I make \$1,000 clear I sha'n't worry much over the loss of my job. I'll be worth \$2,200 then, and I guess that's as much as my father has saved in the last ten years. It's my opinion I can make more money following the market than by running my legs off for any broker in the Street. At any rate with the start I ought to have in a day or two I've a great mind to give the plan a trial and see how I come out. If I lose all the money I won't be any worse off than when I started in."

Sid delivered his note and then started back for the office.

He had hardly taken off his hat when Brown's bell rang loudly, and Sid went in to see what he wanted.

"Where have you been?" he asked, sharply.

"Over to the Exchange."

"Well, here is a note I want you to deliver when you are through for the day. I give it to you now because I'm going to a directors' meeting and may not be back. There is no answer."

Sid took the note and put it in his pocket.

"Look here, young man, who gave you that tip on B. & O.?"

"I can't tell you, Mr. Brown, as it's confidential."

"And you bought some of the stock at a bucket-shop on margin on the strength of it?"

"I bought the shares at a little bank on Nassau Street."

"Well, that establishment operates on bucket-shop principles."

"Only so far as buying and selling small amounts of stocks. They do business on the square, same as any reliable broker."

"How do you know? That bank is an eyesore to Wall Street and ought to be suppressed. It encourages messengers and clerks to gamble by making deals in as low prices of any stock on the list. It has cost a good many of their positions."

"I don't blame the bank because I've lost my job. Nobody there invited me to speculate. I went there of my own accord."

"Do you expect any other broker will hire you when he learns why I discharged you?"

"I haven't thought about the matter."

"I suppose you expect to make enough out of your B. & O. deal to enable you to loaf around for awhile," sneered the trader.

"I've never loafed in my life, and I don't expect to begin now."

"Huh!" ejaculated Brown, putting on his hat. "Don't forget that errand."

"No, sir. I'll deliver it all right," and Sid walked outside.

At half-past three Sid finished his duties for the day, and then started for a lunch house to get a sandwich and a cup of coffee before going on his errand.

The note was addressed to a Water Street wholesale house not far from the Brooklyn Bridge, and Sid can't expect it would take him long to cover the distance.

He entered the warehouse five minutes after four, handed the note to the cashier in the counting-room and then walked out again.

As he started up a side street where there was a tall cheap tenement house he saw a crowd of ragged urchins around the door looking into the dirty entry.

The screams of a girl inside had evidently drawn them to the spot.

"What's the trouble?" Sid asked one of the kids.

"Mother Moses is lickin' her gal ag'in, dat's all."

At that moment the girl in question broke away from her tyrant and rushed out into the street, the crowd opening to give her passage, and then scattering as the harriidan came rushing after her victim.

"Save me! Save me!" shrieked the girl.

She looked to be about fifteen years old, with a pretty, innocent face that contrasted strangely with the ragged dress that clung to her sylph-like form.

She ran blindly into Sid's arms, and then struggled to get away from him.

"Oh, please let me go. She'll kill me," cried the terrified girl.

"No she won't—not while I'm around," replied the boy, swinging her behind him as the wicked-looking hag made a grab for her with one hand while in the other she held a strap uplifted to inflict a blow.

The woman glared at the young well-dressed messenger.

"Stand out of my way," she snarled.

"So you can hit this girl? Not much. Haven't you beaten her enough already?" retorted Sid, looking the harriidan in the eye.

"What's that to you? She's my property. Come here, you—"

She shook her fist at the girl.

"Please don't hit me any more," sobbed the little victim.

"Just wait till I get hold of you. I'll skin you alive."

She tried to dart around Sid, but the boy gave her a shove and landed her in a heap on the sidewalk.

With a scream of rage she picked herself up and swooped down on the boy.

As the strap descended he dodged and then caught it. With a jerk he yanked the hag off her feet and sent her rolling out into the gutter.

The old woman was tough and full of fight.

She filled the air full of threats as she scrambled up.

Sid began to realize that he had placed himself in an unenviable situation.

Had she been a man he wouldn't have cared so much, for then he would have been prepared to use his fists, but he couldn't strike a woman, even if she was a disreputable old harridan.

The crowd of small boys had now increased to a mob, and additions to their ranks were appearing every moment.

A scrap between Mother Moses and a stranger was a sight to fill them with glee, and though they had no love for the old woman they began encouraging her to pitch in again.

The tumult aroused the attention of the whole neighborhood and every window in the tenement soon held an occupant, mostly women of untidy aspect.

The two saloons near by emptied their customers on the sidewalk, and matters were looking decidedly strenuous.

"I'll kill you!" screeched the harridan, making another rush at Sid, with her long, scrawny fingers extended to tear his flesh.

Sid dodged again with the activity of a monkey, and the woman tripped and fell for the third time.

She pitched head foremost against the tenement wall, and, striking the corner of the doorway, rolled over unconscious.

CHAPTER II.

SID MAKES A DOUBLE PROFIT ON THE B. & O.

Nobody offered to pick up the hag.

The chorus of satisfaction that went up from the tenement windows showed that she was not popular among the women of the house.

Half the kids rushed to look at the vanquished harridan, the rest crowded around Sid and expressed their admiration of his prowess.

"You're de fust feller dat ever licked Mother Moses round here," said one. "She's a hully terror, and ain't afraid of nobody—not even a big cop. She banged de ear of one awhile ago, and nearly tore de coat off anudder. I don't see how yer done it. We t'ought you'd be wiped up."

"You'd better sneak afore she comes to," said another. "If she gets a knife she'll carve you up."

"Where's the girl? Who is she? No relation I'll swear," said Sid, looking around the crowd.

"You mean Nellie. Nobody knows anyt'in' about her 'cept she lives wit' old Mother Moses. If I was her I'd run away. I guess she's afraid to do dat."

The girl had disappeared at any rate, so Sid guessed he'd better go on his way before the hag came to her senses and made more trouble for him.

Accordingly he pushed his way through the crowd and walked off, followed by many admiring glances.

When he reached the corner he saw a policeman hurrying down the other side of the street.

"I didn't get away any too quick," he thought, as he continued on.

He couldn't help thinking about the girl he had defended as he walked along.

Although attired in rags, and apparently of the tenements, there was something about her that seemed to say she was out of place in her crude surroundings.

At any rate Sid felt a strange interest in her, and he thought about her all the way home.

Next morning he bought a Wall Street daily on his way down town and scanned the market report of the previous day's operations.

B. & O. showed an advance of nine points above what he paid for it.

"It will surely go higher today," he thought, "and it will probably be well for me to sell out at the first chance I get. In any event I'll take a chance, for now that I'm practically out of the office it's to my interest to look after number one. Mr. Brown gave me a pretty cold shake, and I guess I don't owe him anything more than he'll get out of me."

At about eleven o'clock Sid was sent to the Exchange, and then he saw that B. & O. was going at an advance of twelve and a fraction points.

He decided he wouldn't take any more chances on it, so on his way back he ran up to the little bank and ordered his 100 shares sold.

It happened that in the meantime B. & O. went up another point, so that when his shares were sold by the bank's representative he made a profit of \$1,300.

He figured his profits at \$100 less, and did not learn of the extra profit until the bank settled with him on the following afternoon, which was Friday.

On Saturday morning Sid saw his successor.

In general make-up he was a young dude.

Sid found out he was the son of a friend of Brown, and had just graduated from a select academy for young gentlemen.

His father was ambitious to make a broker of him, and had asked Mr. Brown some weeks before to get him an opening in Wall Street.

The broker hired him to fill Sid's shoes.

He wouldn't have thought of doing it only he was angry with Sid for presuming to speculate after he had told him not to, and it wasn't long before he regretted making the change, but then it was too late to rectify his mistake.

The office force were much surprised when Sid bade them goodby on Saturday noon.

It was the first intimation they had that he was going to leave.

They were not aware that he had been discharged, and he did not tell them.

They supposed he had struck a better job in some other office, and wished him good luck.

"Well, I'm worth \$2,500, and that's better than holding down any messenger job in Wall Street. My folks don't know that I'm worth twenty-five hundred cents. Inil can't average a whole lot more than eight dollars a by using my money to some advantage I shall be

surprised," he said to himself as he walked to a lunch house to get something to eat.

Instead of going directly home afterward he walked down to Water Street and made his way in the direction of the tenement in front of which he had had the scrap with the old harridan.

His purpose was to find out if possible how the girl Nellie was getting on.

He had a strong desire to rescue her from the clutches of such a villainous companion, and had an idea of consulting the police on the subject.

When he reached the tenement he saw one of the boys who had spoken to him sunning himself outside of the door.

Walking up to him he said:

"I suppose you don't remember me?"

"Sure I do. You're de feller wot put it all over Mother Moses de udder afternoon. A cop came up after you sneaked and seein' de old woman lyin' like a dead one was goin' to send for an ambulance, but she come to and told him she wasn't goin' to no hospital. Den he wanted to know wot de trouble was. She told him it was none of his business. Dat she had jest been lickin' her gal for bein' sassy to her, and she guessed she had a right to do it as much as she wanted to. She didn't say nottin' about the scrap. When she went into de house he found out all about it from de men who had been lookin' on. As you wasn't around he didn't bother no more and walked off, after chasin' us kids away."

"Did Nellie go back to her?" asked Sid.

"Yep. She sneaked in about an hour later."

"Did the old woman give her another whipping?"

"I dunno. I wasn't around."

"What part of the tenement do they live in?"

"Dey ain't dere any more."

"No!" cried Sid, surprised and disappointed.

"Some feller wot knowed the old woman come and took dem away with all their traps, and everybody 'round here is mighty glad dey're gone, not dat dey had anyt'in' ag'in de gal. She was all right. But de old woman was a hully terror for fair."

"How long did they live here?"

"T'ree or four months."

"Seems strange to me that a girl like Nellie should stay with that old hag."

"She was dat afraid of her dat she didn't dare leave her, dat's wot I t'ink."

"You haven't any idea where they went, I suppose?"

"No. Wot you want to know for? Want to tackle de old woman ag'in?"

"I thought I'd like to help Nellie get away from her."

"Hully gee! Are you lookin' for trouble? Dat old woman 'ud t'ink nottin' of puttin' a sword into you if she got a chance. You was lucky to get off de way you did. Dere ain't a man 'round here would have tackled her de way you did. Everybody was afraid of her. Even de cops fought shy of her."

"It's a wonder she wasn't pulled in and sent to the

"It's a fact."

Seeing that he couldn't learn anything more about Nellie, Sid bade the youth goodby and walked away.

On Monday morning Sid started for Wall Street at his usual hour, his parents ignorant of the fact that he had lost his position with Broker Brown.

After spending perhaps twenty minutes on Broad Street, watching the crowd of employees hastening to their offices—a sight that made him feel like a duck out of water—he went up to the little bank and took his seat on one of the chairs provided for customers fronting a good-sized blackboard.

As matters were lively in Wall Street there was already quite a crowd of cheap speculators present.

B. & O. still occupied public attention, though to Sid's eye it looked shaky at 124, which was the figure it had closed at on Saturday noon.

"It's my opinion it's due for a break," he thought. "I don't think it will go much higher."

He amused himself watching the people in the room, and wondering how many of them were out of work.

When the Exchange opened at ten the quotations began to come in, and were put up on the blackboard under their respective headings by a small youth employed for that purpose.

B. & O. opened at 124 1-8 and gradually went to 125.

The next quotation was 124 7-8.

When Sid saw that he came to the conclusion that the tide was turning, and going up to the margin-clerk's window he put in an order for the bank to sell 200 shares for him, depositing \$2,000 to cover the margin of security required.

Hardly had he got back to his seat when B. & O. was quoted again at 125, and then went to an eighth above that, and finally back to 125.

For twenty minutes it hovered at that figure and then began to go down an eighth at a time.

At eleven o'clock it roosted awhile at 124, and then it slumped again to 123.

This caused a rush of the speculators long on the stock to cash in.

Sid watched the dropping of the price with great interest and excitement.

He had sold short at 125, and now at 123 he was \$400 ahead.

"This knocks the messenger business into a cocked hat," he breathed. "I've made about a year's wages inside of an hour, and I may collar twice as much before the day is out. Brown did me a big favor by bouncing me. On top of it all I'm boss of my own time. This is what I call fine."

When one o'clock came around B. & O. was down to 121, and that meant Sid was another \$400 to the good.

He had no thought of going to lunch as things stood.

In fact he did not think at all of his stomach.

He kept his attention glued to the blackboard, and his eyes on the quotations of B. & O. as they came out.

At two o'clock the stock had reached 119 1-2, and its downward move came to a stop.

The next quotation was 119 5-8, and the next an eighth higher.

"I guess it's time for me to close out my deal," he said, "or I'm liable to lose some of my profits."

So he went to the clerk's window and ordered him to buy 200 shares of B. & O. to cover the amount he had sold, and as soon as this arrangement had been put through, he strolled out of the room and went to lunch with a famous appetite.

After eating he went into the messengers' entrance of the Exchange and looked at the blackboard there.

He saw that B. & O. had recovered to 121.

He returned to the little bank and remained there watching the market in general till three o'clock, then he walked down to the Battery, spent an hour there with the crowd of idlers, and after that went home.

The following morning found him at the little bank again, but all he did that day was to settle with the bank and collect \$1,000 profit.

CHAPTER III.

TROUBLES OF A NEW BOY.

After spending an hour at the little bank on Wednesday morning Sid came to the conclusion there was nothing doing for him, so he went out to watch life on Broad Street in front of the Exchange.

It felt rather strange for him to realize that he no longer was a messenger, and that for the present his hustling days were over.

Indeed, he didn't feel quite easy over his independence.

He didn't know what to do with himself.

He almost wished he was back again with Brown.

"If I hadn't been bounced I wouldn't have made that \$1,000 on Monday," he told himself. "I wouldn't have collected that sum in two years had I remained a messenger, so what am I kicking about? The trouble is I'm not used to doing nothing. I must try and think up some way to put in my time between deals. I guess I'll go down to the Curb and see how the mining brokers are getting on."

As he started to cross the street a boy ran up and slapped him on the back.

"Hello, Sid, how are things?"

The speaker was his friend Dick Pratt.

"Fine as silk," replied Sid.

"You don't look as if things were rushing at your office."

"You mean Brown's office."

"Of course—what else?"

"Well, Brown's office doesn't worry me much at present."

"What do you mean by that?"

"I'm not working there any more?"

"No," replied Dick, in surprise. "When did you quit?"

"Saturday."

"You don't say. Make a change for the better?"

"I think I did. At any rate there's more money in my new occupation."

"Then you're not a messenger any more?"

"Not at the present moment."

"Who is your new boss?"

"A party about my size and general appearance."

"What's his—Gee! There's my boss coming across the street. I'll have to skip," said Dick Pratt, hurrying away.

Sid went over to the Curb market and stood there for awhile.

Business appeared to be good with the traders and a lot of stocks changed hands while the boy stood there.

"Hello, Davenport, this is the first time I ever saw you standing still," said a trader Sid knew, grabbing him by the arm.

"Yes, sir; rather a new experience for me," replied the ex-messenger.

"Picking up points for Brown?" smiled the gentleman.

"No, sir; just putting in time."

"Why, are things so slack with Brown?"

"I couldn't say how they are there this week. I left him on Saturday."

"Left Brown!" ejaculated the broker, in surprise. "How did that happen?"

"We had a little disagreement."

"I never expected that Brown would part with you if he could help it. I've heard him say that you were one of the best messengers in the Street."

"I always tried to do my duty, and didn't often make a mistake. I don't care to explain what the trouble was between Mr. Brown and myself, but it proved to be serious enough to cause a break in our relations."

"So, you're out of a position now?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you know old man Hodge, the operator? His office is in the Trask Building on Exchange Place."

"I know him by sight."

"That's what I meant. I understand that he wants a messenger, or will want one in a few days. You might go around and strike him for the job. Brown will give you a recommendation, I am sure, even if you have quit him."

"Thank you, sir. I'll call on Mr. Hodge."

The broker then said goodby and walked away.

Sid, however, showed no great rush in getting around to the operator's office.

Owing to his recent success in the market he was not anxious to go to work for anybody.

Hodge wouldn't want him to speculate on the side any more than Brown did, and Sid felt that he could do a whole lot better speculating than carrying messages around the district for a new boss.

Probably he was foolish, for the next deal he embarked in might be a losing venture, and clean him out of a considerable part of his capital.

In fact nobody knew better than Sid that the market was a decidedly risky game of chance, where the blanks greatly outnumber the prizes.

Just the same he had the idea that fate had picked him out as one of the fortunate ones.

That is pretty much what all speculators think until sad experience undeceives them, otherwise they wouldn't go into the game.

So instead of rushing down to see Hodge, Sid walked back to the little bank and spent the rest of the business day there.

While he was there he saw Brown's junior clerk, Phil Hooker, come in and make a deal at the window.

Sid grinned to himself.

"Brown would throw a fit if he knew that Hooker was in the game, too," he thought. "It isn't unlikely that he'd get the bounce also. Well, he won't find out through me. I wonder how his new messenger is coming on? He doesn't look like an ideal hustler to me. Maybe he'll turn out all right after he gets broke to harness. I wish him luck at any rate."

At a quarter before three Sid left the little bank and strolled down Broad Street.

He thought he'd look in at the messengers' entrance to see if any of his acquaintances were there.

As he turned in a boy pushed by him in a great hurry and preceded him in.

"Hello, there Clarence Townsend, now."

That was the name of Brown's new boy.

Clarence approached the rail with an air of great importance.

He had a note in his hand for his employer's representative which he had been instructed to deliver in a hurry, as it was nearly closing time at the Exchange.

The rail was lined with messengers waiting to deliver notes.

As one of them left Clarence sprang into his place, but in doing so he trod on the foot of the boy on his left.

"Hey, who are you walkin' over," said the messenger, fetching him a dig with his elbow in the stomach.

"Ouch!" cried Clarence, falling against the boy on his right.

"Who you shoving, you dude?" exclaimed the other, pushing the new boy against the other one.

"Holy smoke! Do you think you own this place?" cried the first boy, who was red-headed and aggressive, knocking Clarence's hat off, and elbowing him out of the line, which closed up.

Clarence recovered his hat and then retaliated by knocking the red-headed lad's hat over onto the floor of the Exchange.

That precipitated a scrap between the two, and Clarence got a black eye in short order.

Sid saw an attache rushing to the scene, so he separated the combatants just as the Exchange closed, and all the boys but Clarence and Sid made a dash for the sidewalk.

"There's your note on the floor," said Sid, as he started to go, too.

The new boy, looking much the worse for his experience, picked it up and looked around the Exchange in some perplexity.

"You'd better get back to your office," said Sid. "You can't deliver that note now."

"I don't like this job," replied Clarence, grouchy. "I don't know what I'll say to Mr. Brown when I get back. He told me the note was important, and must be delivered before this place closed. If those fellows had let me alone I'd have done it. I'll have a swollen eye tomorrow. I guess I'll report sick and not come down. I'd like to get square with the chap who hit me."

"I wouldn't try if I were you," said Sid. "That's Mike Brady, and he's a tough lad. He'd be likely to do you up."

"I don't care who he is. He's got no right to hit me," said Clarence, stepping outside with Sid.

Just then the man for whom Clarence brought the note

came along, and seeing him the boy stepped up and handed it to him.

"This is a nice time to hand me this," said the broker, after reading it. "Go back and tell Brown that he sent it over too late."

So Clarence started for the office to report to his boss.

"If he isn't in for a calldown I'm no guesser," thought Sid, looking after his successor. "He got here in time to deliver the note, but he fell up against the hard luck of a new boy, and I'll bet Brown won't be pleased. If Clarence doesn't look out he won't last. If that note was very important Brown will be apt to say things that Clarence won't like. I've been there myself."

Then Sid walked away chuckling to himself.

CHAPTER IV.

NELLIE AGAIN.

During the month that followed Sid participated in several deals.

He came out shy on a majority of them, but on the whole he found himself \$500 to the good, after paying all his expenses, which raised his capital to \$4,000, so that he had no call to kick at the way Fortune was treating him.

During this time he had thought more than once of the unfortunate Nellie, and wished he might come across her again; but he figured that his chances of doing so were decidedly slim.

One afternoon a broker named Carter, who was on friendly terms with Sid, and knew how the boy was employing his time, met him on the street.

"Well, Sid, how is the market treating you?" he asked.

"I can't complain. I've made over \$1,500 since I quit Mr. Brown, not counting the \$1,300 profit I captured out of B. & O. a day or two before I left his office."

"You're doing well, but don't get over-confident, or you may get a jolt that will make a hole in your capital. If I hear of anything good I'll let you in on it, for I'd just as soon give you a boost as not."

"Thank you, Mr. Carter."

"You're welcome. By the way, I'd like to have you do me a favor. I'll make it all right with you."

"I'll be glad to do you a favor, Mr. Carter, if it's in my power," replied Sid, who was anxious to stand well with the broker.

"Well, drop around to my office in half an hour and I'll tell you what I wish you to do."

"All right, Mr. Carter, I'll be on hand," replied Sid, and the trader walked off.

At the appointed time Sid called at Carter's office and was shown into his private room.

"Sit down, Sid. The favor I wish you to do for me is this: Do you see that package?" said Broker Carter, pointing to a small packet on his desk.

"I surely do," replied the boy.

"Well, I want you to take it to the home of a customer of mine. He lives in the suburbs of Hackensack. There are negotiable bonds in that package of the value of

\$15,000. I did intend to employ a messenger, but when I saw you on the street I changed my mind. I know you have every confidence in you, and I believe you are smarter than any A. D. T. boy that walks on two feet."

"Thank you for the compliment, sir."

"You deserve it. Here's a couple of dollars for your expenses. You can get a trolley car at the ferry that will take you within a few blocks of your destination. Here is the receipt you will ask the gentleman to sign after he has opened the package and found that its contents correspond with the wording of the receipt. You had better start right away so that you can reach Mr. Taylor's house before dark."

"All right, Mr. Carter. I'll see that he gets the package, and I'll bring you the receipt in the morning," said Sid, getting up and making for the door.

It didn't take him long to reach the ferry, and fifteen minutes later he was boarding a car in the State of New Jersey.

He had quite a ride before him, but he didn't mind that.

This mission was a change in his daily routine since leaving Brown's office, and he was rather tickled at the idea of transacting an important errand for his friend, Broker Carter.

When he left New York there was no indications of a change in the weather, but when he got on the car on the New Jersey side of the river he noticed a bank of dark clouds climbing the sky in the direction he was going.

"I hope it doesn't rain before I deliver my package," thought Sid, "for I haven't got an umbrella, and if I am obliged to seek shelter somewhere it will delay me, and that wouldn't suit me at all."

The clouds mounted higher and higher as the car sped on its way, and the afternoon grew darker and more somber.

The greater part of the distance had been covered when the car stopped at a junction of two tracks and the conductor shouted to Sid, who was the only passenger left on board, "take the car behind for Hackensack."

"I thought this car went through," replied the boy. "Your sign reads Hackensack."

"We turn off here. The regular Hackensack car will be along in a minute or two," replied the conductor.

"I hope it will, for it looks like rain, and there isn't any shelter around here that I can see."

"There's a roadhouse a hundred yards away; but it won't rain before your car comes. Get out now, I'm waiting for you."

Sid got out, but he didn't like to do it.

He thought it was an outrage to have to change cars at that lonesome spot on the border of the marshes that skirted the Hackensack river, and it was particularly annoying to have to change under the present weather conditions.

The car he had quitted ran on to the other track and soon disappeared in the distance.

Sid looked back in the direction he had come, but there was no sign yet of "the car behind."

The sky was now wholly clouded over, and was more threatening than ever.

Through the trees Sid saw the roadhouse which the conductor had mentioned.

It didn't look very inviting, and as far as he could see there was not a sign of life about it.

About half a mile away he saw other houses strung along at intervals, but they were too far away to relieve the bareness of his surroundings.

Five minutes or more passed away and the Hackensack car had not come in sight.

The cold southing wind that came across the river and the marshes compelled Sid to button his coat close up to his throat.

Then when his patience was about exhausted it began to rain, though not hard.

It came on harder presently, and Sid realized that he would have to seek the shelter of the roadhouse if he wanted to escape a drenching.

He started for it on a run and soon reached the porch.

The house appeared to be closed up tight, which seemed an odd thing for a public house, unless, as he surmised, it was deserted.

He soon found this wasn't so, for through one of the closed blinds a ray of light shone, and presently he heard a girlish voice singing a mournful kind of song.

Sid's curiosity was aroused and he looked through a break in the closed shutters to see what the singer looked like.

She was sitting at a small table sewing, with her back toward him so he could not see her face.

There was a lighted candle on the table close to her elbow, and this threw her shadow upon the nearest wall.

All that Sid could make out about her was that she appeared to be a young girl very poorly attired.

She was alone in the room, and her surroundings were not particularly cheerful or attractive.

It appeared to be the public room of the house, for it was fitted with a small bar, graced with a meager supply of bottles and glasses, three or four tables similar to that at which the girl was seated, a dozen very common wooden chairs, while the walls were garnished with several cheap pictures.

It was clear to Sid that this roadhouse wasn't doing any business to speak of, and he wasn't greatly surprised for he didn't see where customers were coming from.

"I don't wonder that girl is not in a cheerful frame of mind," thought Sid. "Sitting alone in that room on such an afternoon as this is enough to give a person the blue funk. It might be that she's all alone in the house, too. If she is she stands it pretty well. I wish I could get a sight of her face. It strikes me she's pretty."

The rain now not only came down hard but the wind swept it all over the small piazza, so that Sid found that his place of shelter didn't amount to much.

"I can't stay here and expect to keep dry," he said. "I'll knock on the door and ask that girl if I can stay till the rain lets up. If this is a public house I guess she won't have any objections. I'll buy a glass of soda, and a couple of good cigars, if they've got any good ones here, which I'll give the governor when I see him this evening. If the girl is all alone I'll be company for her."

So Sid banged on the door, and presently a girlish voice asked who was there.

"I'm a boy from New York on my way to Hackensack," replied Sid. "The car I came on thus far dumped me out at the junction yonder, and I was told to take the next car. The next car hasn't shown up yet, and it's raining so hard I'll get well soaked unless I can get in under a roof. I'd like to come in till it clears up."

His explanation appeared to be satisfactory to the girl, for he heard her unbolt the door, turn a key and then the door opened.

"Thank you, miss," said Sid, stepping inside. "This is a public house, isn't it?"

"Yes," replied the girl, in a low tone.

As she stood in the shadow, and turned her back to him to close the door, which she did not lock now, Sid failed to see her face.

"I don't drink or smoke, miss, but I'll buy a glass of soda and a couple of cigars in consideration of the privilege of remaining here a short time."

"You are welcome to remain here without buying anything. We haven't much to sell anyway, for few people come here. There may be soda. I will see if you wish me to. I've never seen anything drunk here but whiskey, mostly by Jim Poynders—"

She stopped abruptly and then said:

"If you are wet I'll light a fire in the stove."

"You needn't take that trouble on my account, miss. I—"

Just then he caught a good look of her in the candle light.

He uttered an exclamation of surprise.

He recognized her as Nellie, the tenement house girl, in whose behalf he had laid out Mother Moses, the old harridan.

CHAPTER V.

IN THE ROADHOUSE.

She seemed to find something familiar about him, too, for she looked at him in an earnest way.

"I think we have met before, miss," he said. "Your name is Nellie, isn't it?"

"Yes. And you are the boy who—"

"Interfered to save you from a hard-looking old woman whose name I was told is Mother Moses. That happened on ——— Street in New York, about six weeks ago. You have managed to escape from that old hag, I judge, or I wouldn't have run across you here."

"No," she replied, in a hopeless tone; "I'll never get away from either her or Jim Poynders as long as they are able to prevent me."

"Do you mean to say that the old woman is here in this house?" asked Sid, not relishing the idea of encountering the hag again.

"She and Jim have gone to Jersey City to meet one of their friends."

"And they left you here alone?"

"Yes."

"Why didn't you take advantage of the chance to make your escape?"

"I wouldn't dare," she replied with a frightened look.

"Wouldn't dare! If you went to the police and told your story they would put you out of reach of that old woman and her pal."

"Jim would find me and bring me back to Mother Moses, and then—"

She shuddered as she spoke and showed evident terror.

Sid saw that she was completely under the thumb of the two rascally persons who controlled her actions.

"Look here, Nellie, I've taken an interest in you and would like to do something that would save you from the companionship of these people you are living with."

"You can do nothing for me."

"I don't see why not. How came you to be connected with them? You are not one of their stripe. Why are they holding on to you? There is some good reason for it, or they wouldn't want a nice girl like you around, for there is nothing in common between you and them. I haven't seen this man you call Jim Poynders, but I judge his character from the fact of his association with such an old reprobate as Mother Moses, who, in my opinion, ought to be in prison."

The girl sank into her chair, buried her face in her hands and wept.

Sid felt more interested in her than ever, and deeply sympathized with her sad and unusual situation.

"Look here, Nellie, tell me the truth and I promise you I will do everything in my power to rescue you from the clutches of your cruel oppressors."

"I—I don't know much about myself," she sobbed; "but what little I remember I—I dare not tell. She, Mother Moses, would kill me if I did. She said she would, and Jim said the same."

"But they never would know you told me. They are not here now."

"They would learn. They would see it in my face. Then they would—"

"It can't be possible that you have been very long in the society of these persons. You don't look or act like a girl raised in the slums. Your conversation shows that you have had the advantages of some education. Your face and figure indicate respectable and refined parentage. Had you been kidnaped when you were young, and brought up among such surroundings as the tenement of ——— Street, or even worse, that life would have left its impress on you. Your nature would have been warped like a plank left for a long time in the sunshine. You cannot touch pitch without getting it on your hands and clothes. Do you see what I'm getting at? You have not long been under the power of Mother Moses and this Jim Poynders or you would show it. Am I not right?"

"I have known Jim Poynders as long as I can remember. He claims to be my father, but I do not believe it. At any rate he left me, when I was a very little girl, with a farmer and his wife, on Long Island. There I lived until five months ago when Jim Poynders, who had visited me at irregular intervals, came and took me away from the farm. He brought me to New York and gave me in

charge of Mother Moses, with whom I lived in the tenement on ——— Street. She treated me with great harshness, particularly when she was half drunk, as she mostly was. I made one attempt to run away, but she caught me before I got far, and she whipped me so cruelly that I could hardly move for a week. She told me then if I tried it again she'd kill me, and she thrust a wicked-looking knife before my face. She looked as if she meant it, and I believe she did. I have heard her mutter in her sleep about a policeman she stabbed years ago in Boston. Jim also told me that Mother Moses would think nothing of cutting me into ribbons if I tried to get away again, and he said he couldn't prevent her if she took a notion to do it. The afternoon you interfered to save me from her I stayed away from the house till after dark. When I went back I half expected to be killed. She started to beat me worse than ever when two men of the house stopped her. She got her knife and chased them up stairs. I believe she cut one of them badly and probably would have killed him if Jim had not come in and hauled her away. She would have been arrested, only that Jim got a wagon, put all our things on it and drove out here, where we have been since."

Sid listened to Nellie's story with interest, but he learned nothing from it that would throw any light on the girl's real history.

"Who was the farmer you lived with on Long Island?" he asked.

"His name was John Frost."

"Whereabouts on the island was the farm?"

"Near the town of Riverhead."

Sid made a note of those two facts in his mind.

He was pretty well satisfied that Nellie had been stolen from her rightful home and parents when she was very young, for some reason, by this Jim Poynders.

He suspected that revenge more than ransom figured in the matter, for surely the girl's parents would have spent their last dollar, if necessary, to get her back.

Still this might not be the true fact of the case.

There might be other reasons in the background to account for the girl being under Poynders's control.

It was clear that she, the innocent victim of it all, was ignorant of the real truth, consequently Sid could only guess at the mystery.

He determined, however, to interest himself in her fate, and see if he could get a line on the secret that was at the bottom of the matter.

During the time they were talking the dark and lowering afternoon had merged into a rainy twilight that rapidly melted into the shades of early evening.

The rising wind blew in intermittent gusts across the marshes and flung the rain against the back windows with considerable force at times.

The storm which had been threatening for hours did not burst with full force, but seemed to be playing with the landscape.

It would rain for ten or fifteen minutes and then stop entirely.

Then it would come on again with fresh force, only to subside to a drizzle.

Sid not only paid no attention to the weather, but he

had forgotten all about the important errand he was bound upon.

The packet of bonds rested in the inside pocket of his coat.

Several Hackensack cars passed within fifty yards of his place of shelter, but their fleeting presence had no influence on his actions.

His thoughts at present were centered in the girl, and he talked as gently to her as he might have done to his own sister, and strove in every way to cheer her up, and assure her of his strong interest in her welfare, present and future.

"You are so good to think of me," she said, flashing a look of gratitude in his face. "I haven't a friend in the world."

"You have one now, for you have me at your back," said Sid.

"But I don't want you to get yourself into trouble on my account," she said, earnestly. "You really cannot do anything for me."

"We'll see whether I can or not. At any rate I mean to try."

"No, no; Jim or Mother Moses would kill you if they caught you trying to take me away from them. You don't know how bad they are. You must not remain here any longer. It is dark outside and they may come back at any moment. If they found you here—"

"I could say I took shelter from the rain. It is still coming down, you see."

"They would put you out and beat me for letting you in," she said, with an anxious look from the door in the direction of the junction.

"It would never do to have you beaten on my account, so I suppose I'd better go, just as soon as the next car comes in sight."

"I wish it would stop raining, for it is too bad that you should get wet."

"Don't worry about me. I won't melt. Just put your trust in me, and remember that you have one friend who will do his best to rescue you from your present surroundings," said Sid, taking her hands in his and looking into her eyes.

"It is so kind of you to interest yourself in me. I know you are a brave boy and a strong one, from the way you treated Mother Moses that afternoon. She swore horribly that night, when she told Jim about the trouble. She said if she had her hands on you that moment she'd get even with you, and she meant it. Now go, please go, for if she and Jim found you here, and she remembered you, you might never get away alive."

"Well, goodbye for the present, Nellie. You will hear from me when you least expect it."

He drew her face to his, kissed her on the lips, and started for the door.

"Wait till I look out before you go," she said, her nerves all of a tingle over his kiss, and her heart beating furiously with a newly-born sensation.

As she placed her hand on the knob a man stepped on the porch and began stamping his feet.

"Hurry up, Mother Moses; what in thunder is the matter with you?"

Nellie recognized the tones and her face went white.

With great presence of mind she shot the bolt and turned the key in the lock.

"They have come," she whispered, excitedly. "You must go out by the back."

She pulled Sid across the room to a door that commanded a view of the marsh, just as a heavy pounding came on the front door.

Shooting the bolt, a tremendous gust banged the door open in their faces and extinguished the candle.

"Go, go," she cried, earnestly.

She pushed him outside into the black night, shut the door and bolted it.

CHAPTER VI.

HODGE, THE WALL STREET OPERATOR

Face to face with utter darkness and a driving gale laden with raindrops, Sid stood with his back to the door, utterly bewildered.

"This is a fierce situation to be in," he muttered. "I'll be like a drowned rat by the time a car picks me up, and will present a fine appearance when I call on Mr. Taylor with the package he is expecting. It's as black as the ace of spades around here. I'm either at the back or the side of the house, and I've got to get around to the front to begin with."

He was conscious that he was standing on a platform or stoop, and lest he get a fall he began to move cautiously forward.

This was not easy to do in face of the fierce wind blowing against the house.

Suddenly his feet slipped and he shot off the low porch like a cannon ball.

His extended legs crashed against something that sounded like glass.

His body followed his legs through the cellar window, carrying away sash and all in his flight, and he landed in a heap on a pile of gunny sacks.

The sacks broke his fall, and though badly shaken up he was not hurt in the least.

At first he hardly knew where he was, for his surroundings were pitch dark, but the absence of wind and rain soon made him realize that he had tumbled into the basement or cellar of the roadhouse.

He heard somebody come to the door above, look out and then go in again.

Then he heard footsteps on the boards above his head and guessed he was under the room from which he had just made his exit.

After a few moments of inaction he fumbled for his watch case.

Pulling it out of his pocket he struck a light.

He saw by the stone walls around and the mass of rubbish that he was in a cellar.

Glancing up he saw the ceiling through which light came in.

His clothes were covered with particles of glass and the wrecked sash lay on the bags at his feet.

There wasn't a cut on his hands or his face, and he marvelled greatly at his escape from a wound of some kind.

He saw he had carried away the crazy sash in his flight, which accounted for his face and hands having escaped a scratch.

The hole was too high for him to get out by without the aid of something to stand on, so he started to look for a box, or something else that would serve the same purpose.

There was nothing of the kind in the cellar.

He opened a door he came to and striking a match saw a flight of wooden steps before him.

There was a door at the head of them, and Sid ventured to walk up and open it to see where it led.

It opened on a hallway, and Sid found that fact out by striking a watch.

There was a door at either end of this passage and one on the right side.

Also a flight of stairs communicating with the next story.

A dull gleam of light shone under the side door, so Sid judged that that door connected with the public room.

The door ahead he figured opened on the road in front of the house.

That was his avenue of retreat, so he was about to start for it when there came a smart pounding on the door.

"Gracious! A visitor! I must get out of this hallway or I'll be seen."

He had a quick choice between entering what seemed to be a rear room or returning to the cellar, and he chose the former as being the most convenient.

Sid heard a man's steps issue from the public room into the passage and go toward the door on which the knock had come. The knocking was repeated.

"I suppose that's Jim Poynders," thought Sid. "In fact it can't be any one else. I'd like to catch a sight of his face so I'll know him if I ever see him again."

It was Jim Poynders, and when he got to the door, he drew the bolt, turned the key and peered out.

"Who's there?" he asked gruffly.

"A stranger. My auto broke down a short way up the road. As it is raining heavily I can't walk any further and so would ask shelter for the night. I will pay you well."

"This is a public house, though I'm not doin' much business. Come in," said Poynders, assuming a friendly tone. "Are you alone?" he added as the man limped in.

"I am. You are very dark here."

"This is not the regular entrance—only a hallway. There is a hall in the public room. Follow me," said Poynders after unlocking and securing the door.

He led his visitor into the main room of the house, which was now illuminated by a lamp with a reflector set in a bracket attached to the wall near the bar.

Nellie and Mother Moses were cooking supper in the small kitchen off the room at the back near the door that Sid had made his hasty exit through.

The table at which Nellie had been sitting when Sid passed through the blind door was empty before he

knocked for admittance, was spread with plates, knives and forks, and cups and saucers for three.

There was a fire burning in the stove which Poynders had kindled soon after his arrival with the old woman, for both of them had been wet.

"Let me help you off with your overcoat," said Poynders to his visitor. "Then take a chair by the fire and warm yourself."

With the man's assistance the stranger divested himself of his heavy overcoat, which Poynders spread across a chair at the back of the stove, and presented a well-dressed appearance.

A heavy gold watch-chain was hooked across his vest, diamond cuff buttons sparkled at his wrists, and a valuable diamond stud glistened in his handsome four-in-hand tie.

As Poynders noticed these evidences of wealth an avaricious gleam shot from his eyes, and a wicked expression came over his face.

The visitor was a man between fifty and sixty years of age, and appeared to be in good health.

"Shall I prepare you a glass of hot whiskey? You will find it warming after your tramp in the rain," said Poynders.

"Thank you, I shall be glad to have it," replied the stranger. "I feel quite chilled by the raw night air, the wind and the rain."

He sat down before the fire while Poynders went behind the bar.

The proprietor of the roadhouse filled a tumbler half full of whiskey and then took the glass into the kitchen to get the hot water, and to communicate a few facts to the old woman in an undertone.

Mother Moses peered out at the visitor through a crack in the door, and then whispered something in Poynder's ear.

The man nodded, and re-entering the room went behind the bar again and added to the whiskey a few drops of liquid from a small three-ounce druggist's bottle that he took from a drawer.

Then he walked over to the stranger and handed him the smoking whiskey on a battered tray.

The gentleman took it, swallowed about half of it at a gulp, then after remarking that it seemed to go to the right spot, finished it and returned the tumbler to the tray, which Poynders carried away.

While these things were transpiring in the room, Sid had discovered a sliding panel in the wall of the little room in which he had taken refuge.

This panel was about the height of his head and communicated with the public room.

It had evidently been put there for the purpose of passing liquor through to persons in the small room.

Judging from the cobwebs hanging around it the panel had not been disturbed for a long time.

As a matter of fact, as the little room was not used by Poynders nor the old woman, the panel had escaped their observation.

Even had it attracted their notice they would have paid little attention to it.

With great caution Sid pushed the panel open an inch or two and looked into the public room.

Poynders was in the act of handing the whiskey to his visitor and his back was towards the boy.

When he stepped back after the gentleman had taken the glass, Sid got a fair view of his countenance, and it was not a reassuring one by any means.

Rascal was written all over it in unmistakable characters, and the wonder was that the gentleman had not felt some misgivings at finding himself in the society of such a man in so lonesome a place.

After studying Poynders's physiognomy to his satisfaction, Sid looked at the visitor.

He gave a start of surprise, for in him he recognized Hodge, the Wall Street operator, of No. ——— Exchange Place.

CHAPTER VII.

THE PERIL OF MR. HODGE.

"Mr. Hodge here!" breathed Sid, much astonished at the wealthy Wall Street man's presence in the roadhouse. "What has brought him to this neighborhood on such a night, and what could have induced him to seek hospitality in such a place? If that watch chain and diamond stud doesn't tempt these people to rob I am a poor guesser. Why, people have been murdered for much less than that—a good deal less. With such a display of jewelry, Poynders and Mother Moses will conclude he has a roll of money in his pocket as big as a house. I must save him somehow."

At this juncture Poynders stepped over to the visitor again.

"Supper is bein' cooked," he said. "Shall I have somethin' prepared for you—a chop or some ham and eggs?"

"No, thank you. I had my dinner in Hackensack, and am not at all hungry. If you will show me to a room presently where I can rest till morning, it is all I require."

"Nellie," called Poynders.

The girl made her appearance from the kitchen.

"Go up stairs and prepare the front room for the use of this gentleman," said the rascal. "He is goin' to remain all night."

"The front room," said Nellie, looking at the operator in a nervous way.

"I said the front room," replied Poynders, with a threatening look.

The fresh beauty of the girl, as well as her artless, innocent look, attracted Hodge's attention.

"Is that your daughter?" he asked as Nellie moved toward the door.

"My daughter! Sure."

"She doesn't seem to resemble you," replied the trader, dryly.

"That isn't my fault. She looks like her mother," answered Poynders.

"Her mother must be a fine woman, then."

"She's dead and buried long ago," said the rascal.

"Oh!" exclaimed the operator, and he looked at the stove.

Poynders went to the front door and looked out.

"It's stormin' worse than ever," he said when he came back. "You were lucky comin' to this place."

"Yes," replied Hodge. "It feels comfortable to be under a roof on such a night."

"You were on your way to New York, I suppose, when your auto broke down?"

"Yes."

"You were not alone, eh?"

"My chauffeur was with me. I sent him back to a blacksmith shop we passed for help to try and repair the machine."

"Then he knows you came here?"

"No, for I was not aware that there was a house in this direction. My purpose was to catch a trolley car at the junction. It came on to rain so hard that, seeing this house, I decided to ask for shelter."

"You did the right thing. May I ask your name?"

"Hodge—Andrew Hodge."

"Of Wall Street?" exclaimed Poynders, looking a bit startled.

"Yes. How did you know?"

The man looked confused, but recovering himself said:

"I heard your name mentioned by a couple of brokers who stopped here yesterday for drinks and a light lunch."

"Indeed. They did not give you their names, did they?"

"No. They were strangers to me."

Hodge turned to the stove again.

In a few minutes he put his hand to his head.

"The heat of the room seems to have made me drowsy," he said. "If the room is ready I will go to bed."

"I guess it's ready by this time," said Poynders. "I'll show you upstairs."

"Thank you," replied the operator, rising from his chair with some difficulty. "I don't know," he added, "but my head feels kind of queer. I wonder if the wetting I got could have—dear me, the room seems to dance around me. Pray, give me your arm. I never felt this way before. I hope I'm not going to be ill here."

"You'll be all right in the mornin'," said Poynders, supporting his uncertain steps to the door. "Lean on me and I'll get you up stairs in a minute."

They passed out of the room together and then Mother Moses, who had been watching from the kitchen door, came into the place with a hideous leer on her wicked countenance.

"Gee! She's a fierce looking old hag," muttered Sid, who was able to size her up better than at the time he had the scrap with her. "I believe she wouldn't hesitate to commit a murder if she thought she could gain anything by it. If Mr. Hodge had seen her I think he'd have changed his mind about remaining here all night; but she was smart enough to keep in the background. I wonder what was the matter with him when he left the room? He didn't act just right. I hope he isn't sick. It doesn't seem to me that the wetting he got would affect him in that way, at least not so soon. When that rascal comes back I must slip upstairs and warn him of the character of the man and woman in this house."

Mother Moses stood looking at the door which had closed behind Poynders and the operator.

"What luck!" she chuckled, rubbing her skinny fingers together, while a wicked light shone in her bleared eyes. "He must have a pile of money about him. Them Wall Street men always do. That diamond pin must be worth a lot. Them cuff buttons and that watch and chain, too. Fine pluckin', he, he, he! Fine pluckin' for Jim and me. No one knows he came here—no one, he, he, he! The marsh is handy—right at the door, and no one need ever know. If his body is found it's easy to say that he walked in there in the dark and the storm. Ho, ho, ho! No one will ever suspect us. Why should they? We ought to make enough out of this night's luck to go West. Jim has been wantin' to go for some time, but things were ag'in us. Now this slice of good fortune comes to our door. I know'd somethin' would happen soon. Yes, sir; I dreamed t'other night that Jim and me was ridin' in our carriage like swell folks, and that the money had come to us through that gal. Confound her fair innocent face. I hate it!" and the speaker worked her fingers savagely. "Jim was a fool to have her brought up on that farm. He should have raised her in the slums, and then she wouldn't have that face. No, no; she'd be like the others. Ah, if I only dared spile her beauty for her. If I only dared; but Jim won't have it. Jim is too soft-hearted; but I'll make a man of him yet. Tonight, perhaps."

She muttered her thoughts loud enough for Sid to hear the larger part, and the wicked way in which she spoke made the boy's blood run cold.

At that moment Nellie returned and Mother Moses chased her into the kitchen and told her to put supper on the table.

The girl hastened to obey, and by the time everything was ready Poynders came back.

The three drew their chairs to the table and began to eat—Poynders and Mother Moses with an excellent appetite.

He determined to take advantage of the chance to go up stairs and warn Mr. Hodge.

He slipped stealthily out of the room and was presently mounting the stairs on his toes.

"He's in the front room," thought the boy, stealing along the landing.

There were two doors in front and two at the back.

Sid opened the door directly ahead and looked in.

It was so dark he could see nothing, so he struck a match and saw that it was a small room, furnished with a cot, a washstand, a small old-style bureau, and a chair.

There was no one there, and a dress hanging from a hook with a hat beside it, and some other female apparel, told him it was the room occupied by Nellie.

"He's in the next room, which is doubtless larger," thought the boy.

So he turned the handle of the door on his right and walked into the room.

He heard heavy breathing from a corner.

Striking another match he saw Mr. Hodge stretched upon a large-sized bed with his clothes on.

"Good; I'm glad he is not undressed," breathed Sid.

Going up to the sleeper he seized him by the arm and shook him.

The operator did not respond.

"Wake up, Mr. Hodge," said Sid, shaking him with more energy.

The Wall Street man, however, did not wake up, nor show the slightest signs of doing so.

"My gracious! He must be in a sound sleep," thought the boy, who thereupon shook him with some roughness.

The operator still breathed on, and showed no more animation than a log.

"Surely there is something the matter with him," said Sid anxiously.

He lit a match and held it to the gentleman's face.

"That isn't a natural sleep. I believe he has been drugged. In that case I can do nothing to get him away from this den of villainy. They will rob him at their leisure, and then perhaps to cover up the crime, throw him into the marsh. I heard the old woman mutter something about the marsh, but what it was I didn't catch. What shall I do?"

Sid was face to face with a very serious problem, and he hardly knew how to act.

Andrew Hodge was a large man, and it was not possible for Sid to think of getting him out of the house by himself.

How then was he to save the gentleman from the fate that hung over his head?

He made another effort to arouse the operator, but it was as fruitless of result as the other.

As he stood in the darkness thinking how desperate the situation was an idea occurred to him.

He struck another match and looked at the gentleman.

"He has not been robbed yet," he muttered. "If I take property there will be nothing for these people to lay hold of, and consequently there will be no excuse for them to touch him. At any rate I'll be able to foil them, and that's a whole lot."

With this purpose in view, Sid hastily detached Mr. Hodge's gold watch and chain and put them in his pocket.

Then he pulled out the diamond scarf-pin and stuck it in the folds of his vest.

The diamond cuff buttons followed.

Then he went through the operator's clothes and found, as he expected, quite a roll of money, the amount of which he did not waste time to find out.

Having secured everything worth taking, Sid left the room as softly as he entered it and returned to the passage below.

He went to the front door and opened it.

It was raining torrents outside, and blowing great guns.

"Lord, must I go out in that?" he muttered.

Then it struck him that he ought to remain in the house at all risk and see that Mr. Hodge was not made away with.

It took a lot of nerve to decide to stay in the danger zone when the worst he could expect outside was a complete decking, which, of course, was bad enough in its way; but Sid had as much sand as any boy alive, and he believed it was his duty to stand by the Wall Street man to the limit.

So he closed the door, but did not secure it, and returned to the little room at the rear of the passage.

CHAPTER VIII.

JIM POYNDERS GETS HIS.

Opening the sliding panel once more Sid looked into the public room where he had left Poynders. Mother Moses and Nellie eating supper together.

They were just finishing the meal—in fact Nellie was already through and was in the kitchen washing some of the dishes, and thinking, perhaps, of the boy who had promised to help her get free from her miserable surroundings.

His kiss still tingled on her young lips, and the thought of it made her heart beat faster, and sent the red roses into her cheeks.

She supposed he was miles away from the roadhouse by that time, and great, indeed, would have been her anxiety for him had she even suspected he was concealed only a few yards from the room in which she stood.

The old hag and Poynders were talking together in a low tone, but as the table at which they were seated was close to the panel every word they said was easily heard by Sid.

"He's safe enough, Mother Moses," said Poynders. "As soon as Nellie is done with her work we'll send her to bed and then pay our man a visit."

"That diamond in his scarf must be worth a lot of money," said the hag, in a greedy tone.

"You can bet it is—close on to a thousand dollars," replied the man, with a look of satisfaction.

"As much as that? What luck! And them cuff buttons."

"A hundred dollars if they're worth a cent."

"Did you look at his watch? That chain looks to be heavy—the real stuff."

"No, I didn't touch anythin'. Time enough for that for he's our meat, to pick over at our own convenience."

"Best of all he must have a roll of bills in his pocket. How my mouth waters when I think of it," cried the hag.

"Of-course. I expect to find a wad in his clothes."

"And when we have plucked him, what then? It's the marsh, isn't it? The marsh tells no tales. He will be gone and that will be the end of him."

"The marsh! No, no."

"And why not?" hissed the old harriidan. "Are you goin' to let him wake up in the mornin' in the room and find himself cleaned out? A pretty thing that would be. He would accuse us of takin' his property, and what could we say? We can't leave here on such a night as this. Even if we did the police would soon spot us, and then we'd be locked up, and tried, and sent away for a long time."

"We must get rid of him, but not by way of the marsh."

"What better way than that?"

"It's death and he must not die."

"Bah! Jim Poynders, you always was chicken-hearted. It will be your ruin."

"I have my reasons why he must live. He is valuable to me."

"In what way?" sneered the hag. "Do you expect to

get another chance to rob him? Such luck don't happen twice with the same man."

"My reasons are my own, Mother Moses," replied Poynders, sourly.

"So. You have a secret from me, eh? Take care, Jim Poynders, how you go back on me," said the harridan, savagely. "We were to pull together, and divide equally. If you try to cheat me I'll—"

"Well, you'll do what?" said the man, in an ugly tone.

"I'll fix you—fix you, do you hear?" she screamed.

"Yes, I believe you would—if you got the chance," said Poynders, as Nellie, attracted by the shrill tones of the hag's voice, came trembling to the kitchen door and looked into the room.

"Don't you tempt me, Jim Poynders," hissed Mother Moses. "You ought to know me. I've helped you work your points, and I'll have my rights."

"And I've saved your neck many a time, for you're too handy with that tongue of yours. Only for me you wouldn't be sittin' here tonight. The electric chair would have shocked your old life out of you long ago."

"Bah! I can look out for myself. I've done it before I met you. Was I hung for the cop I fixed in Boston?"

The old woman grinned like a famished hyena.

"And there are others you know nothin' about. I've got the grit that you lack, Jim Poynders. But we are wastin' time. I'll send Nellie to bed, and then we'll pluck our bird. After that how are you goin' to get rid of him and still let him live to put the police on us? If I don't like your plan I will have my own way in spite of you."

"My plan is to tell him in the mornin' that the house was entered by thieves durin' the night and that we were cleaned out as well as he," said Poynders.

The old hag cackled scornfully.

"You expect he will believe that, eh? And the police, they will believe it, too, when he reports the matter in Hackensack? Are you losin' your brains, Jim Poynders? Do you s'pose I want the cops nosin' around where I am? Don't you know I'm wanted in New York for hurtin' that chap on ——— Street the night we left there? Don't you s'pose the Jersey police have my description, and if they found me here they'd nab me?"

"You wasn't afraid to go with me to Jersey City to-day?"

"We took care not to go where we'd run agin' the cops, didn't we? We visited a pal of yours who's layin' low for reasons. We didn't take any chances. It would be different if the cops came to us."

"You could make yourself scarce for a few days."

"This is the safest place for me, and here I mean to stay till you're ready to go West. The chap upstairs ought to furnish the means. If you don't want to sew his mouth up don't pluck him. Let him go on his way in the mornin' with all his wealth, and then go and jine the church, Jim Poynders," sneered the hag in a wrathful tone.

"Woman, will you stow your gab?" snarled the man.

"No, I won't. We're partners, Jim Poynders, and I won't let you make a fool of yourself. The gent upstairs must go into the marsh after he's plucked, do you hear me? If you don't want to take a hand in it leave him to me. I'll drop him out of the winder and drag him

to a hole that'll cover him for good. Then tomorrow we'll pack up and leave with our swag."

The hag spoke like a person who was laying the law down and would not be gainsaid.

"I tell you no. I won't have him harmed," cried Poynders, hoarsely.

The hag sprang on her feet, livid with passion.

"Nellie," she screeched, "go to bed."

The girl, who had finished her work in the kitchen, was glad to take advantage of the order, and left the room by way of the passage.

The aspect of things between Mother Moses and Jim Poynders made her more than ordinarily nervous.

She had often seen them quarrel, but never was the old woman aroused to the pitch she was tonight.

Nellie feared serious trouble between them, and she didn't want to be a witness if they came to blows, for she feared it might end in murder.

She rushed up to her room and flung herself on the bed in a tremor of apprehension, with her hands pressed over her ears to shut out any sounds that might come up to her.

She trembled not only for herself but for the gentlemanly visitor in the adjoining room.

She felt certain that he would be robbed, perhaps murdered, during the night, and the thought of such a thing filled her gentle soul with horror.

Outside the storm held high carnival.

The howling wind shook the crazy old building from foundation to roof, and the rain pattered loudly on her window.

It seemed a fitting night for crime to stalk forth unchecked.

And while she lay trembling on her bed, Sid was also quivering with excitement in the little room below.

The old hag with blood in her eye had drawn a wicked looking knife from somewhere about her, and her attitude toward Poynders was one of awful menace.

"Is it the marsh or isn't it?" she screamed, leaning toward him in the attitude of a panther about to spring on its prey.

"No it isn't," replied the man doggedly, drawing his hand from his hip.

With a screech Mother Moses sprang at him with her gleaming blade in air, only to stop and recoil as she looked into the barrel of a glistening revolver.

"Thought you'd catch me off my guard, didn't you, Mother Moses?" he cried. "But I know whom I'm dealin' with. Drop that knife or I'll drop you."

The hag uttered a terrible cry but did not obey the order.

She tried to circle around him, but the effort was a failure.

For every step she took Poynders had to move hardly an inch to keep her covered.

Baffled completely in her efforts to reach him, she flung the knife on the floor in a rage and falling down herself seemed to go into a fit.

Poynders picked up the knife and tossed it behind the bar.

Returning the revolver to his pocket he looked down at the hag.

"Get up," he said, roughly. "It is time we went up stairs and cleaned out the visitor. You shall have half the money we find in his clothes and his diamond cuff buttons to boot. Get up, and act reasonable."

He reached down to seize her by the arm.

As he did so the wily haridan, who was only shamming, suddenly rose up, and flung her arms around his waist.

"Here, I say, quit that," he cried.

But he never suspected her deadly object.

Her talon-like fingers were feeling for the butt of his revolver.

In a moment she got one hand on it, drew it from his pocket, and gave him a push that sent him staggering back.

"Now, Jim Poynders, I've got you," she screeched, covering him with his own weapon. "I say it's the marsh, I've heard. Not only for him up stairs but for you, too."

With a fiendish look she pulled the trigger.

There was a flash, a sharp report, and Poynders whirled around and fell flat on the floor on his face, where he lay quite still.

CHAPTER IX.

SID SHOWS HIS HAND.

"He, he, he!" cackled the old woman. "You've got yours at last, Jim Poynders. And it's your own fault, you fool. You ought to have known better than to go ag'in me. Now you'll go into the marsh yourself along with the gent upstairs. I'll do all the pluckin' myself. I'll have your share and mine, too. My dream will come true, for I shall ride in my carriage like any fine lady; but it will be out West, where the cops don't know Mother Moses. Nellie shall be my maid, and wait on me. She's under my thumb now, but with Jim out of the way I'll lead her a life, and spoil her beauty, and do as I please with the miss. Now to business," she said, laying the revolver on the table. "Now to pluck the bird, and then to the marsh with both of them. Bah, you white-livered fool!" she cried, giving the motionless rascal a contemptuous kick with her shoe.

She picked up the candle Nellie had used, lighted it and left the room.

Sid, staring through the opening of the panel at the body of Jim Poynders, heard her steps shuffling along the entry, and on the stairs going up.

When they died away above he woke up to the changed situation.

The tragedy that had just happened under his eyes was not wholly unexpected by him, for the hag's purpose had been evident to him from the moment she sent Nellie from the room.

He felt that one or the other of the two was going to get hurt over the difference of opinion about the disposition of the drugged operator.

When Poynders yanked his revolver out he thought the hag was doomed, but the reverse was the fact, owing to

the craftiness of the old woman, who artfully turned defeat into victory.

And now what was he to do?

There would be something doing the moment Mother Moses discovered that Mr. Hodge had been cleaned out already.

She would, of course, suspect that Poynders had robbed their victim himself while he was up stairs with him, and she would come down in a great rage and search his body.

Sid's plan of action was outlined the moment his eyes rested on the revolver lying on the table.

With that in his hand he felt that Mother Moses, with all her craft, could not turn the tables on him.

To think was to act with Sid.

It took but a few moments for him to run into the room and pick up the weapon.

Then dashing for the rear door he removed the key.

Running to the front door he took possession of that key, too.

There was also a key in the door opening on the entry.

He reversed its position in the lock.

Hardly had he accomplished that when he heard the old woman coming down the stairs muttering savagely to herself.

Sid knew what she was going to do, and he retired to the little room to wait for her to re-enter the public room.

The moment he heard her slam the door he came out and turned the key on her.

He had her caged for the time being.

She couldn't get out by either of the doors, but she might do so by way of one of the windows.

However Sid had done the best he could to block her.

He intended to go up stairs and remain at the head of the stairs until morning, protecting both Mr. Hodge and Nellie from any move on the old woman's part if she broke the entry door down—a fact he was not sure but she was capable of accomplishing.

He first went to the front door of the entry and secured it, putting the key in his pocket, and then he ascended the stairs.

He wondered if Nellie was asleep.

To find out he went to her door, opened it and looked in.

The room was just as dark as when he inspected it the first time.

"Nellie," he said, in his ordinary tones.

There was a movement on the bed.

"Nellie, are you awake. It is I, Sid Davenport."

A shadow sprang up and a low cry came from it.

"You—you back here!" cried Nellie. "Oh, why did you return?"

"I didn't return, Nellie," he said, stepping forward and putting his arm protectingly around her, "because I haven't been away from the house at all."

"You haven't been away?" she exclaimed in wonder.

"No. When you pushed me out of the back door I missed my footing and slid off the porch through a window into the cellar."

"Oh!" she exclaimed. "That was the crash we heard. My heart jumped into my mouth when Jim Poynders went to the door and looked out. I was afraid it was you, and that he'd see you."

"I heard him come to the door. I was in the cellar at the time."

"Do you know if anything happened down stairs? I heard a shot, and then Mother Moses came up stairs and went into the next room where the gentleman, who took shelter here soon after you left, is sleeping. I am sure she went there to rob him. Perhaps she has killed him, though I heard no cry. I am so frightened," and she trembled in his arms, and clung to him as her only protector.

"Yes, something has happened. Mother Moses got Poynder's revolver from him and shot him."

"Shot him!"

"Yes. She's settled him for good, I judge, and you are clear of him."

"Oh, my!"

"I've got the old woman locked in the room down stairs, and she can't get out except by breaking through one of the windows. I am glad to keep her away from this part of the house at any rate. If she escapes she'll have to leave you behind. I guess you've seen the last of her, for in the morning I intend to put the police on her track. They're bound to catch her, sooner or later, and then I'll see that she gets what is coming to her. I saw her shoot Poynders, and my testimony will convict her. After this I shall take care of you myself. You shall go home with me and my mother and sister will look after you until some arrangements can be made for your future."

"It seems too good to be true," faltered the girl.

"I told you I'd stand by you and I have kept my word."

"Yes, yes, you have. I am so grateful to you—indeed I am."

"All right, and don't fear but I will continue to stand by you. I will look out for you just as if you were a sister, so cheer up, Nellie, and put your trust in me. I'll never go back on you. You believe me, don't you?"

"Yes, oh, yes. You are so good."

He drew her face to his and kissed her.

"Oh!" she cried, hiding her head on his shoulder.

"Are you glad to have me for a protector?"

"Yes, yes."

"And you will look on me as a friend?"

"Yes."

"Remember my name is Sid, and you will call me that. Now I'm going outside to keep my eye on Mother Moses, and see that she doesn't get too gay."

"Oh, Sid, be careful. She has a knife," said the girl, tremulously.

"Poynders took it away from her and threw it behind the bar. She may have got it again, it is true, but I've got the revolver she shot him with, and that will protect me. As for that gentleman in the next room, he's as safe as you are. He has not been robbed by Mother Moses, because I visited the room while you three were eating supper, and took charge of his money, his watch and other jewelry. The old woman, I dare say, is furious by this time. After shooting Poynders she came up to rob the gentleman, and finding nothing on him she went back to search the dead man below, thinking he cleaned the gentleman out himself when he thought him up stairs. She has found out that Poynders hasn't got the plunder about

him, so I guess she's searching the room below to discover where he hid it."

Sid changed his mind about mounting guard at the head of the stairs.

He was curious to learn what the old woman was doing.

He also wanted to prevent her from leaving the house, for she was so slick that she might be able to elude capture if she once got away, and he considered she was too dangerous a character to be at large.

So, after telling Nellie to go to bed and sleep, so as to be ready to go away with him in the morning, he went down stairs.

Peeping through the panel he saw the old woman sitting in a chair staring at her dead partner in guilt.

Poynders now lay on his back with his pockets all turned inside out.

There were signs of confusion around the bar where the hag had evidently been searching for the swag she suspected the man had hidden.

As a matter of fact she had searched the whole room and then sat down to consider what she would do next.

When Sid looked in at her she had just come to the conclusion that the plunder was hidden up stairs in the room where the gentleman lay in his drugged sleep.

She sprang up and went to the door.

Her surprise and consternation was great when she found it was locked on the other side.

To her mind there was no one in the house who could have done this but the girl Nellie.

She shook the door furiously and uttered fearful yells. Finding the door resisted her efforts she rushed to the bar and picked up a bung starter.

Her intention was to smash in the panels and force her way out.

Sid realized that he would have to chip in and prevent her.

It would not do for her to get up stairs, for he'd only have to follow and tackle her there at some disadvantage.

The present was the best time to take the bull by the horns.

So when she rushed at the door, with wrath in her eye he shoved the panel wide open and cried:

"Hold on, Mother Moses. Your game is up. Drop that bung starter or you're liable to land in the morgue."

Thus speaking Sid menaced the hag with his revolver.

CHAPTER X.

SID AND THE WALL STREET MAN.

The hag started back with a snarling cry and glared at the unexpected apparition of the revolver and the boy's face at the open panel.

"Who are you?" she hissed. "And what are you doing in this house?"

"I am here to see your finish," replied Sid, coolly.

Quick as a flash the old woman whirled the bung starter at him.

Sid was taken by surprise and barely dodged in time to save his face.

The movement caused him to pull the trigger.

There was a flash, a report and a terrible cry from the old woman.

When he looked in she was rolling about on the floor, one of her legs shattered by the ball.

He watched her for some moments with grim satisfaction.

He would hardly have cared if he had killed her, though the idea of shedding human blood was repellant to him.

He scarcely regarded her as better than a wild animal.

She made desperate attempts to get on her feet, uttering horrible cries all the time, but she couldn't.

She saw that he had effectually crippled her, and that her power for working further mischief was practically at an end for the present.

Leaving the panel he went to the door and was in the act of unlocking it when a hand was laid on his shoulder.

"Oh, Sid, what has happened?" said Nellie's voice in his ears.

"You here, Nellie! I've laid Mother Moses out."

"Have you killed her?" she fluttered.

"No. You hear her howling, don't you? She's wounded in one of her legs, I think. I did it accidentally, but I'm not sorry. It simplifies matters. She won't be able to make her escape now, so the police will surely get her in the morning."

"Are you going in where she is?"

"Yes; she can't hurt me now. Besides, I've the revolver to protect me."

He flung the door open and entered the room.

Mother Moses fairly frothed at the mouth when she saw him.

She reached out her arms at him and worked her fingers as if she hungered to tear him to pieces.

When she saw Nellie in the gloom behind she became still more enraged, and flung the most awful threats at her, so that the poor girl shrank back terrified.

"Cut it out, you old harridan," cried Sid, sternly. "I've heard enough from you. Cut it out, do you hear?"

But the old woman would cut nothing out.

She was the very incarnation of viciousness.

She worked herself up till nature couldn't stand it and then she fell back in a real fit, which ended in unconsciousness.

"She's settled," said Sid. "Is there a bit of rope about the place?"

"Nothing but a piece of clothes line outside," replied Nellie.

Sid went to the back door and opened it.

The storm had spent itself by this time.

The rain had stopped and the clouds were breaking up.

Taking his knife from his pocket he stepped out and cut the line.

Then he bound the old hag securely with it.

While he was thus engaged, Nellie gazed fearfully at the dead Jim Poynders.

She could hardly realize that one of her persecutors was gone, and the other in a fair way to follow him, leaving her a free girl at last.

Sid dragged the unconscious harridan out of the way, but did not touch the corpse.

Then turning down the lamp over the bar he locked the passage door, and went up stairs with Nellie.

"Everything is safe for the rest of the night," said Sid. "Is there another bed in the house where I can lie down?"

"There is a cot in the large back room where Mother Moses slept," replied the girl.

She opened the door of the apartment and Sid struck a match and looked in.

The room was in the confusion that the old hag kept it, but the cot was ready for occupancy, as Nellie had made it that morning and it had not been touched since.

"You go to bed now, Nellie, and don't feel nervous," said Sid. "You saw me tie the old woman so tight that she can't possibly work herself loose. There is no danger of any more trouble tonight. I'll be asleep inside of ten minutes. Good night."

He kissed her again, and Nellie returned to her own room.

She undressed and went to bed, but it was long before she closed her eyes.

A new and pleasant future was opening before her, and that of itself was sufficient to keep her awake.

But her heart was swayed by other indescribable sensations, of which the brave boy who had come to her rescue figured most prominently.

She regarded him as her one and only friend, and what she wouldn't have been willing to do for him is hardly worth mentioning.

It was a bright, sunshiny morning when Sid awoke in his strange surroundings.

He had not removed his clothes when he lay down so it was but the work of a moment to put on his jacket, after washing his face and arranging his hair as best he could.

Knocking on Nellie's door he found her already up and waiting for him.

He looked into the large front room and found the operator sitting on the edge of the bed looking rather dopy.

"Good morning, Mr. Hodge," he said. "How do you feel?"

The Wall Street man blinked at him.

"Morning, young man," he said. "You belong to the house, I suppose?"

"No, sir, I should hope not."

Mr. Hodge stared at him.

"I asked you how you felt, sir," added the boy.

"Rather ragged. My head feels a bit light."

"I believe that's one of the after effects of a dose of knock-out drops."

"What's that?"

"I suppose I shall surprise you when I tell you that you were drugged last night," said Sid, cheerfully.

"I was drugged last night?"

"Yes, sir. You were focussed all right."

The operator looked at him in bewilderment.

"Why should I have been drugged?" he said, slowly.

"That you could be robbed with ease. Have you the time?"

Mr. Hodge's hand went to his watch pocket, but of course his watch was not there.

He looked down in a startled way and missed his massive gold chain.

Instinctively he felt for his expensive diamond pin, and found that gone, too.

So were his diamond cuff buttons, a present from a valued friend.

Then he dived into his trouser's pocket where he carried his roll.

His wallet had vanished like everything else.

"My heavens! I've been robbed. Look here, young man, do you know who has done this?"

He looked at Sid as if he suspected him of complicity in the crime.

"Yes, sir. I know all about the matter."

"You do. Are you mixed up in this affair?"

"Yes, sir; but not in the way I judge you think. Let me introduce myself. My name is Sid Davenport. Until six weeks ago I was office boy and messenger for Thomas Brown, broker, whose office is at No. — Wall Street. At present I am not employed. My father is manager for the Parker-Golden Automobile Co. on Warren Street, and I live in Harlem. Now you know who I am."

"Well, how is it you are here and know that I was drugged and robbed? Make your story short, for I've got to see the police at once and put them on the track of this business," said Mr. Hodge, impatiently.

"There is no hurry, sir, as you will understand after you have heard all."

"No hurry! Do you know that I have lost \$400 in money and nearly \$2,000 worth of jewelry including my watch and chain. My diamond pin cost me \$1,200."

"Well, you won't lose anything. The man who drugged you is dead down stairs, shot by his partner in crime. They quarreled over what should be done with you in order to keep you from reporting the robbery in the morning. The woman—"

"What woman? I only saw a very pretty, innocent-looking girl last night."

"You didn't see the old haridan. She kept out of sight while you were in the room below. That's where she was smart, for had you seen her your suspicions of the character of the house would doubtless have been aroused. She's the worst of the racially pair who set out to do you. She insisted that you be thrown into the marsh near at hand on the principle that dead men tell no tales."

"What!" grasped the operator. "Did they intend to murder me, too?"

"The woman, whose name is Mother Moses, did, and because the man wouldn't have it she shot and killed him."

"She did?"

"I saw her do it."

"You did?"

"Yes, sir. Then she came up stairs intending to rob you herself and secure all the plunder for herself, after which she meant to drag you to the marsh and throw you in to drown."

"It is clear that she robbed me, but she did not carry out her other intention or I should not be here now."

"She didn't rob you, sir."

"Who did then, if you know?"

"I performed that job myself while Mother Moses and her racially partner were eating their supper."

"What! You robbed me?"

"Not exactly. I took possession of your property in order to prevent it from falling into the hands of the would-be robbers. Allow me to return it to you and thus relieve your mind."

Sid pulled the roll out of his pocket.

"There's your money, just as I took it in the dark. Here are your cuff buttons. Here's your watch and chain, and here is your diamond stick-pin. That's all, sir."

CHAPTER XI.

MR. HODGE'S STOLEN DAUGHTER.

"Young man, it seems I am under great obligations to you; but still the case is not very clear to me," said Mr. Hodge as he took his property with a feeling of great relief.

"You will understand all presently. As we have plenty time I will begin my story at the beginning in order that you may learn how I came to be here."

So Sid explained about the errand his friend Broker Carter had sent him on, an errand, he regretted to say, he had not been able to carry out as yet.

"Being compelled to leave the car I came thus far on in order to take the next car at that junction, and a sudden downpour of rain, are the causes that made me come to this house. I was admitted by the pretty girl you saw, who, I may assure you, is entirely innocent of any wrongdoing. But of her I talk with you later on. The woman and the man, the one you saw last night, were not in at the time, but when they showed up I, for reasons, got out at the back."

Sid then told how he fell into the cellar, where he was when Mr. Hodge rapped for admission, and all that happened after that as we have told it in the foregoing chapters.

The operator was much astonished by his recital.

"Where is the young girl?" he asked.

"In the next room waiting for me," replied Sid. "She has been in the power of the old woman and the dead Poynders, but she is now under my care."

"Who is she, and how came she in their power?" asked Mr. Hodge, in a tone that betrayed some agitation.

"She doesn't know her own real identity. Her earliest recollection is connected with Jim Poynders. It's my opinion she was kidnaped from her home when a little girl."

"My heavens!" ejaculated the operator, now showing unusual emotion. "Let me see her."

"Certainly, sir. I will bring her in here," replied Sid, surprised at the gentleman's agitation.

He went to the door and called Nellie in.

"Nellie, this is Mr. Andrew Hodge, a rich Wall Street man, who, as you know, took shelter here last night, and narrowly escaped being robbed and murdered."

The girl advanced timidly, holding on to Sid's arm.

Mr. Hodge looked at her keenly and with great earnestness.

His agitation appeared to increase.

"My dear," he said, in tremulous tones, "have you no recollection of your parents?"

"No, sir," she replied, with downcast eyes. "Jim Poynders claimed to be my father, but I am sure he wasn't."

"What is your earliest recollection?"

"As a child on a farm on Long Island with a man and wife named Frost, who I thought were my parents till one day, when I was ten years of age, Jim Poynders came and told me he was my father, and that my mother was dead."

"Was that the first time you remember seeing him?"

"Yes. When he went away I ran to Mrs. Frost and sobbed out my wonder and grief in her ears. Then she told me how, when I was a very little child, Jim Poynders had left me at the farm to be brought up, telling the Frosts that he was my father and could not care for me himself. He went away and did not come back till that day, eight years after."

"I'll bet the reason was because he was serving time in prison for some crime," volunteered Sid.

"I loved Mrs. Frost, for she was very kind to me, and I grieved to think that she was not my mother," went on Nellie. "Two years afterward she died and Mr. Frost married again. His second wife was not kind to me. She made me work hard, and treated me harshly. Jim Poynders called occasionally, but never appeared to think much of me. Five months ago he came and took me away, and that is how I came to be with Mother Moses."

"My dear, I lost my only little daughter when she was two years old," said Mr. Hodge, with emotion. "She was stolen from home by a rascal named Bryant, whom I had discharged from my employ. I spent a fortune trying to find her, but in vain. I never learned what became of Bryant either. It may be that you are my lost little daughter. You have her eyes as I remember her, and her hair was golden like yours. When stolen she had around her neck a diamond incrustated cross, attached to a gold chain. You do not remember such a trifle?" he asked eagerly.

"No," replied Nellie, shaking her head.

"The rascal who stole your child probably took it off and sold it," said Sid, who was listening with astonishment to the operator's revelation.

He thought what a great thing it would be for Nellie if she proved to be Mr. Hodge's daughter.

The operator looked disappointed.

"I must see and talk to this Frost," he said. "Where is his farm?"

"Near Riverhead," said the girl.

"Heaven grant that you prove to be my child. Will you come home with me, my dear? My wife is dead, but my sister will care for you as if you were indeed our own. I already feel drawn to you, and should your identity not be cleared up I will adopt you and give you my child's place in my heart and home."

Nellie looked at Sid with swimming eyes.

"You had better accept, Nellie. It's a grand chance for you," said the boy.

"Then you don't want me?" she said, with quivering lips.

"I have promised to stand by you, little girl," said Sid, putting his arms about her, whereupon she threw her arms around his neck, and began to cry on his shoulder, "and I will if you don't want to go with Mr. Hodge; but he is a wealthy man, Nellie, and can do more for your advantage in a minute than I can in a year."

"I don't want anything. I only want to be with you. I love you with all my heart because you have saved me from Jim Poynders and Mother Moses, and I will work for you if I can. Don't give me up now, I can't bear it. It would break my heart?"

"There, there, don't cry. You shall do as you please. But remember, you may be Mr. Hodge's real daughter. If the fact can be proved, think how nice it will be to find you have a father who will love and care for you, and make a fine young lady of you."

"But I want you, too," she said, clinging to him.

"Mr. Hodge will let me call and see you. He wouldn't refuse you anything."

"The girl appears to love you," said the operator. "Take her home with you, and tomorrow morning call at my office and we will have a talk about her."

"All right, sir. Now let us go down stairs and see how matters are below."

Nellie remained in the passage while Sid and Mr. Hodge entered the public room.

"There is the corpse of Jim Poynders," said Sid. "He doubtless held the secret of Nellie's identity, but his lips will never disclose it now. Somehow I believe the girl really is your lost daughter, sir."

"What makes you think so?" asked Mr. Hodge, eagerly.

"Because Poynders seemed to have some special reason for saving you from going into the marsh. If any person knew the desperate chances he was taking by opposing that she-fiend's will Jim Poynders did, and yet he held out against her. I was watching him and I noted that he was doggedly stubborn in his opposition to bringing about your death. Why should he have any interest in you? Why risk his life in an argument to save yours? Doesn't that show something unusual at the bottom?"

"It looks so," replied the operator.

"Well, he lost his life, and there is his murderess yonder, bound as I left her. I see she's conscious now. I saw her shoot Poynders, and by gracious I'll see that she goes to the gallows for it if there is law in New Jersey to bring it about, and I guess there is," he concluded, grimly.

"I shall investigate Nellie, and may Heaven grant that she's my child. In the meantime I am sure you will take good care of her."

"Don't you worry about that. I think a lot of Nellie already, and my folks will do the right thing by her. If you want to adopt her I'll bring her around to the right way of thinking, for it would be the greatest piece of luck that could befall her."

When they went up to Mother Moses she treated them to a fierce layout.

"I'd like to fix you," she hissed to Sid. "I know you now. You're the boy who interfered with me on —"

Street. If I could only get my fingers about your throat I'd fix you."

"I know you would, you old cat. You'd fix me like you fixed Jim Poynders. I saw you shoot him and I'll see that you get what's coming to you," replied Sid.

"Yah!" snarled the harridan, flashing a look of hate on him.

They walked away from her in disgust.

"Now, Mr. Hodge," said Sid, "I've got to go on to Hackensack to deliver those bonds intrusted to me by Mr. Carter, to a gentleman named Taylor, on ——— Street. I will take Nellie with me, and we will get our breakfast in town. Hadn't I better go to the police station first and tell my story, and hadn't you better come along so as to back me up with yours? Besides, as soon as the police learn that Nellie has been living with Mother Moses and Jim Poynders they'll insist on holding her, and that won't do. I couldn't save her in that case, but you're a man of wealth and influence, and your word will go a long way with the Hackensack authorities, while mine wouldn't amount to shucks."

"I'll go with you," said the operator.

"All right," said Bob. "I'll take the key of the entry door and hand it to the police, so they can use it to get in with when they come here. I guess there is no danger of the old hag escaping."

Nellie was told to get her hat, and anything that she wished to take with her.

She brought a bundle down stairs, and then the three started for Hackensack.

They went to the police station first and told their stories, no mention being made of Nellie's connection with the affair, this having been agreed upon between Sid and Mr. Hodge as the easiest way to keep the girl out of trouble.

The authorities took the matter in hand and sent a wagon with three officers to bring Mother Moses and the body of Poynders to the station-house.

Mr. Hodge took Sid and Nellie to a first-class restaurant where they had an excellent breakfast, after which he started for Jersey City, while Sid, accompanied by the girl, went to Mr. Taylor's house to deliver the package of bonds.

Having executed this errand, Sid and Nellie boarded a car and in due time reached Jersey City, crossed the river and took an elevated train for the boy's home, where he expected to find his folks much wrought up over his failure to return home as usual the afternoon before.

CHAPTER XII.

SID TAKES NELLIE TO HIS HOME.

"Why, Sid!" exclaimed his mother when the Wall Street boy, accompanied by Nellie, walked into the apartment where he lived with his mother, father and a nineteen-year-old sister. "Where have you been? We have been awfully worried about you."

"I'll tell you all about it presently. Let me introduce

this young lady. Nellie, this is my mother. Mother, this is Nellie Frost. Where's sis?"

"She's in her room," replied Mrs. Davenport, rather astonished at the shabby appearance of the visitor, though she admitted her beauty, and was rather taken with her artless expression. "I'll call her."

Dora Davenport rushed in as soon as she heard that her brother had returned.

Sid introduced Nellie to her.

"Entertain her, sis. I want to talk to mother," said Sid.

"Who is that girl you have brought here, my son?" asked Mrs. Davenport. "She is dreadfully shabby. Looks like a tenement-house person."

"I have come in here to have a talk with you about her. She is under my protection at present."

"Under your protection!" gasped his mother.

"Yes, and she's to stay here awhile with us."

"Stay here with us! That shabby girl! Are you crazy, Sid?"

"No, I'm not crazy, mother. She has no home, and I rescued her from a horrible situation. She is not an ordinary girl by any means, and I shall not be surprised if she proves to be the daughter of one of the rich men of Wall Street."

"Why, what do you mean?"

"Mother, Nellie Frost, though Frost is not her real name, is the daughter of parents at present unknown. She was kidnaped from home when barely two years old, and she has been very unfortunate up to the present time. I guess her hard luck is over now, for a rich Wall Street man, who believes he is her father, has offered to adopt her, so I expect her stay here will only be brief. I want you to fit her out in a suitable manner at my expense, so that you need not be ashamed to have her here."

"Fit her out at your expense! Where would you get the money? And I want to know who you are working for now, Sid. When you did not appear last night your father called at Mr. Brown's house to learn if he had sent you out of town. To his astonishment Mr. Brown informed him that you had not been working for him for six weeks. Your father will want an explanation when he sees you. You never told us you had left Mr. Brown and gone to work for somebody else."

"Never mind about that now, mother, we are talking about Nellie. Listen and I'll tell you her story, as she told it to me," said Sid.

He immediately laid all the facts about the girl before his mother.

Then he told her that Andrew Hodge, a big Wall Street operator, had lost his only daughter through a kidnaper, and that when stolen she was of the same age as Nellie when she was intrusted to the care of the Frosts by Jim Poynders.

"Nellie has taken a fancy to me because I saved her from the surroundings in which I found her. She is grateful, and wants to stay under my care. I intended to provide for her, but Mr. Hodge's offer to adopt her is such a chance for her that I intend to talk her into accepting it. She will get a splendid home, fine clothes, and be well educated. In fact Mr. Hodge proposes to treat her exactly as if he was certain she was his daughter."

"But, Sid, tell me where you were last night, and how you came to meet this girl."

"Certainly, mother, but prepare to be surprised."

He explained how Broker Carter had asked him to deliver a package of bonds to a gentleman in Hackensack the afternoon previous.

Then he went on and told everything that happened to him from the moment he left Jersey City en route for Hackensack.

His experience in the roadhouse took his mother's breath away.

"Well, said his mother, who was really a kind-hearted woman, though her ideas of propriety and caste were strong, "since you insist on that girl staying here I will consent to her remaining until your father passes upon the matter. You had better go right down to his office and explain the case."

"I'll go, mother. Now I'll give you \$100, and I want you to spend as much of it on Nellie as you think proper to make her presentable. I don't think she will stay here more than a day or two, as Mr. Hodge wants me to call at his office tomorrow to arrange about her going to his house. Nellie doesn't want to go, but that is because she doesn't know what is good for her. As I have her interests at heart I'll see that she does go, for, of course, I can't expect you to keep her here very long, and I don't want to send her among strangers. I want you to treat her with the utmost kindness and consideration. She deserves it. She's got a heart of gold, and a soul as unsullied as an angel's, notwithstanding her shabby attire, and her five months' experience with bad people."

They returned to the dining-room where they found Dora Davenport talking with Nellie, who appeared to be very much embarrassed and ill at ease.

The girl flashed an appealing look at Sid.

He went directly to her and put his arm around her, much to Dora's astonishment.

Nellie laid her head on his shoulder and Dora gasped and looked at her mother.

"Dora," said Sid, "I want you to understand that this is the best little girl in the world, and I want you to treat her as you would a sister. Don't imagine because she is shabby that she isn't as good as we are, for she is. In fact in a few days she will be in a position to put on more style than we ever have, or ever will. You see how she clings to me? Well, she recognizes me as her preserver and the only friend she has in the world. That is just what I am, and I'd go through fire and water for her, as I would for you and mother. She feels nervous and strange here, and I want you to bring her around while I'm down town. Nellie, you love me, don't you?"

"Yes," she replied almost inaudibly, while her cheeks flushed a deep red.

"Dora, there, is my sister, and I want you to love her, too. Come here, Dora, and take my place. Put your arm around this dear little girl and make her feel at home. I leave her in your charge while I'm away."

Sid got his hat and taking Nellie's face in his hands said:

"I leave you with my sister, dear. Get acquainted with her. I will be back some time this afternoon. Goodby."

Nellie's eyes followed him wistfully out of the room, and then she hid her face in her hands.

Dora, impressed by her brother's earnest words, forgot the girl's poor attire, and putting her arms around her, started in to win her confidence.

Sid went directly to his father's office.

"Well, young man, where were you last night?"

"On the edge of the Hackensack marshes, sir."

"How came you to be there? Were you out in all that storm?"

"I was under cover. The cause of my presence in New Jersey was an errand I undertook for Broker Carter."

"How is it you never told us that you left Mr. Brown's employ six weeks ago?"

"I had my reasons."

"I should like to hear them."

"We haven't time to discuss them now if you want to hear the story of my adventures in New Jersey."

"Indeed. Well, I'll listen to you. One moment, are you working for the broker who sent you on that errand?"

"No, sir."

"Who are you working for?"

"I'm working for myself."

"Yourself!" cried the surprised Mr. Davenport.

"Yes, sir. Seeing that I've made nearly \$3,000 since I cut loose from Mr. Brown I don't see that you can find fault with my course of action."

"You made \$3,000 in six weeks."

"I did."

Sid started in and told his father all about his experience at the roadhouse.

Then he told him all about Nellie.

"I took her up to the house and left her in the care of mother and Dora. In a few days I expect she will consent to go to the home of Mr. Hodge, a Wall Street millionaire, who believes she is the child stolen from him some fifteen years ago. At any rate he means to adopt her if he can't prove she's his daughter, and that means she'll be an heiress."

After some further conversation with his father, who offered no objection to having Nellie stay at their apartment for a few days, Sid left and hurried down to Broker Carter's office to turn over the receipt Mr. Taylor, of Hackensack, had signed.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE DYNAMITE BOMB.

Next day Sid and Mr. Hodge had to go to Hackensack to attend the examination of Mother Moses, who was held for trial.

The operator said he was going out that afternoon to Riverhead to call on Farmer Frost and see what he could learn about the girl.

"Call at my office tomorrow and I may have news for you," he said.

"All right, sir," replied the boy.

"Now I want to make you a little present for what you did for me last night. I believe you saved my life by put-

ting that old woman out of business. In any case you saved me from losing at least \$2,000."

Thus speaking the operator handed Sid a check made out to his order for a thousand dollars.

"I'm much obliged to you, Mr. Hodge, but I'd rather not take it. I only did what I thought to be the right thing, and I don't want to be paid for it," said Sid.

"I'm not paying you. I'm merely giving you a little present."

Mr. Hodge tried to get him to accept it, but he wouldn't, and so the matter rested.

"You are out of a position, I believe," said the gentleman. "I'll look one up for you."

"Thank you, sir, but I'm not looking for a job just now. I'm making more money on my own hook."

"What are you doing?"

"Speculating in the market," and Sid told Mr. Hodge how he had made \$4,000 within the year, the greater part of it inside of the last six weeks.

"You have been very fortunate, young man," replied the operator. "Persons with limited capital usually come out at the small end of the horn. I advise you to be very careful."

"Of course I try to be, but a fellow has to take chances when he goes into the game. If you're anxious to square up your obligation some way I'll accept a tip any time you feel like giving it to me, and I promise you to keep it quiet and just use it myself. I suppose you'd prefer me to take the thousand, but I'd rather not take it."

Mr. Hodge thought a moment.

"Well, if you buy, buy O. & H. right away. It's going at 85, and hold it for about 105, and then sell quick; you'll make some money," he said.

"Thank you, sir. I'll do it."

After leaving the operator Sid called on Broker Carter.

"Here's \$4,000 of my good money, Mr. Carter. I want you to buy me 400 shares of O. & H. at the market, which is about 85. Get it right away, will you?"

"Certainly. Has somebody tipped you off to this stock?"

"If I waited for a tip, Mr. Carter, I wouldn't make many deals," replied Sid, who did not want to put anybody else on the stock under the circumstances.

Carter bought the stock and reported the fact to Sid when he saw him later on.

"Say, Sid, you can have desk room in my office if you want," he said. "I have a small desk in the corner of the counting-room near the door. I have no use for it and you can have it just as well as not. It won't cost you anything. You can have letters addressed to you here, and I'll have your name put on the door in small letters. Then you'll have a sort of headquarters."

"Thanks, Mr. Carter. I'll accept your offer."

That evening after the Davenports had had dinner, and Sid was sitting in the parlor with Nellie and his sister, the bell rang and when Sid went to the door he found Mr. Hodge standing there.

Sid was astonished to see the operator, and judged that he must have obtained important news about Nellie.

"Glad to see you, Mr. Hodge. Walk right in. Allow me to present you to my sister. Dora, this is Mr. Hodge of Wall Street," said Sid.

"Pleased to make your acquaintance, Miss Davenport," said the rich man.

"And here is Nellie—my Nellie I call her at present. She looks better fixed up a bit, doesn't she?"

The operator seemed to pay little attention to his words. He walked straight to the girl who had risen when Sid spoke.

His manner was agitated and his eyes glistened eagerly.

"My dear, dear child, will you come to my arms, for I am your father, and you are indeed my stolen darling—taken from my mother and me fifteen years ago on a never-to-be-forgotten New Year's day."

Nellie flushed and became greatly agitated herself.

She looked at the big, finely-dressed gentleman who claimed her.

"Are you—really—my—father?" she murmured.

"Here is the proof. This little locket with your mother's picture, found in the pocket of Poynders at the Hackensack police station, wrapped up in this paper on which is written the words, 'Proof of the identity of Nellie Frost. If found on my person after death the police are instructed to communicate at once with Andrew Hodge, No. — Exchange Place, New York City, and hand him this locket and the paper.'"

"That settles the matter, I guess," said Sid. "You recognize the locket, of course, if it contains your late wife's picture."

"Yes, I bought that locket myself. Nellie is my daughter. Her name is Daisy Hodge. My dear, dear little girl," catching Nellie in his arms, for he could hold out no longer. "My own Daisy. I have recovered you after fifteen long years. Thank Heaven! Thank Heaven!"

At length he partially released her and she looked wistfully at Sid.

"Nellie, or rather Daisy Hodge, I congratulate you on finding your father. I shall lose you now, but you are in better hands. You won't forget Sid, will you?" said the boy.

She uttered a low cry, released herself from her father's arms and rushing to Sid, threw her arms around his neck and buried her head on his shoulder.

"Oh, Sid, Sid, I don't want to lose you," she cried.

"Oh, you won't lose me. I can call and see her, can't I, Mr. Hodge?"

"As often as you please, my dear boy. I feel very grateful to you in this matter, for you have done not a little in bringing me and my child together."

"Now go to your father, Nellie. Hereafter he is your protector, and will provide you with everything you can wish for. Write me a letter, telling me when you are ready for me to call and I will be on hand," said Sid.

Then her father carried her off with him.

Next morning as Sid was walking leisurely down Wall Street about nine o'clock he received a sudden slap on the shoulder.

Turning around he saw Phil Hooker, Broker Brown's junior clerk.

"Say, Mr. Brown wants to see you," said Hooker.

"Is that so? What about?"

"I couldn't tell you. He gave me a note to take to your

house last night, but I couldn't get over there, so I mailed it to you."

"I didn't get it," replied Sid.

"You'll find it when you go home. I know it contains a request for you to call on him, for I saw the typewriter writing it off on her machine. Better call some time this forenoon."

"All right, I will," replied Sid.

At eleven o'clock he went to Brown's office.

Clarence Townsend was not in the reception-room, so Sid knocked on the door of the private room and was told to come in.

"You want to see me, Mr. Brown, I understand," he said.

"I do. Sit down. I want to know if you will come back to me."

"What's the matter with your new boy?"

"I am going to send him away Saturday. He's slower than molasses, and has cost me a hundred times his wages since he's been here. I'll give you \$10 a week if you will return."

"Sorry to refuse your offer, Mr. Brown, but I'm in business for myself."

"What are you doing?"

"What you fired me for—speculating. I've made \$3,000 since I left here."

Broker Brown stared at his ex-messenger.

At that moment the door was pushed open and a wild-eyed man entered the room.

"I've called for a hundred thousand dollars. I want it quick—quick, d'ye understand," cried the visitor, in sharp, jerky tones.

"Who in thunder are you?" roared Brown, springing up. "Get out of my office."

"Ha! You refuse me! Then you shall die."

"Open that door, Davenport, and help me put this crank out," said the broker.

Sid lost no time in flinging the corridor door open.

Then he heard Brown exclaim:

"Good lord, man, what are you about to do?"

"You have refused me the money, then I shall blow you up, and I will go with you, so you sha'n't escape me."

Thus speaking the lunatic held up a dynamite bomb, the fuse of which he had just lighted with the burning end of a cigar.

Sid dashed forward and tried to wrest the bomb from his hand.

He pushed the boy back and held it out of reach.

Brown stood frozen to the spot with horror.

Seeing that a tragedy would be enacted in another moment, Sid did the only thing he could do to save the broker—he seized his late employer around the waist and rushed him toward the open door.

As Broker Brown shot through the door, propelled by Sid's muscular arms, the bomb exploded with a concussion that shook the building.

The brave boy was sent staggering out into the corridor after the man whose life he had saved.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CURTAIN FALLS ON MOTHER MOSES.

A moment after the explosion there was excitement to burn, not only in the building but on Wall Street; for the whole window had been blown into the air and fell with a crash on the street, while the report had been heard a block away.

All eyes in the thoroughfare below were turned upon the wrecked window from which issued thin wisps of smoke.

Then came a rush of people along the corridor as Sid scrambled up and helped the frightened Brown on his feet.

Everything in the room but the safe was wrecked, and the cause of it all was scattered about on the floor, on the wall, on the safe, on the wrecked furniture in quivering bits of flesh.

It was a shocking sight, and Brown almost fainted as his eyes took in the appearance of his office.

After the crowd got a peep none wanted to go in.

Sid, with good judgment, closed the door, and led Brown around into the reception-room.

Sid explained the situation, for Brown could not.

The cashier took one look into the private-room and he shut the door in a hurry and rushed to the telephone, where he got into communication with the police.

In the meantime several policemen, Wall Street detectives and reporters came into the building, and pushing their way through the mob to Brown's office knocked for admission.

They were allowed to come in, and were told the startling facts.

Brown had now recovered himself and he told everybody that Sid Davenport had saved his life by dragging him out of the room in the nick of time after making a futile effort to knock the bomb from the lunatic's hand.

The reporters soon left to write up their stories for a special edition, and the police took charge.

Sid took advantage of the first chance to get away, and he went to Hodge's office to tell that gentleman the news.

Half the traders in the Exchange had abandoned business on hearing the report and the wild rumors that at first were circulated throughout the financial district.

Sid later on met Broker Carter on the street and told him the facts.

Shortly afterward newsboys were crying "Extras," with full particulars of the tragedy, on the streets of the city.

Mr. Davenport bought a paper of a boy and started to read the story.

When he saw his son's name mentioned he nearly had a fit.

He soon saw, however, that his boy was the hero of the accident, and that he had escaped without a scratch.

It was several days before Brown's office was restored to its former appearance, and quite as long before he got fully over the shock his nerves had sustained.

He sent Sid a note of grateful thanks and enclosed a check for \$5,000.

Sid accepted the thanks but sent the check back.

By this time O. & H. was up to 90, and was attracting much attention at the Exchange.

Two days later it jumped to 95, and the lambs of Wall Street began getting excited over it.

The excitement grew as it kept going up, and there was pandemonium in the Exchange when it reached par.

Sid finally sold at 105 3-8, and cleared a profit of \$8,000.

That raised his capital to the comfortable sum of \$12,000.

While the deal was still on Mr. Hodge brought him a note from his daughter.

It began "Dear, dear Sid," and ended "Yours lovingly, Daisy Hodge."

She told Sid that she was just beginning to get used to her new home, her father and her aunt, whom she called "the sweetest woman in the world."

"If I only had you," she went on, "I'd be perfectly happy. I've got awfully nice clothes making for me. One dress is already finished, and aunt says I look very sweet in it. I sha'n't be satisfied till I hear your opinion. Now, Sid, dear, I want you to come up and see me Friday evening. I've asked father if you may come and he said certainly. Aunty is real anxious to see you. I've told her all you did for me, and how brave you are, and something else which I won't tell you. Now don't disappoint me, for I should feel dreadfully bad if you did not come."

Sid went, you may be sure, for he had a very warm spot in his heart for Daisy, though he could only think of her as Nellie.

When she came into the room to greet him she was a vision of loveliness that almost took his breath away.

He was introduced to Mr. Hodge's sister, and found the lady all that Daisy had represented her.

He and Daisy spent a delightful evening together, and when he rose to go she told him he must call on her at least one night a week, which he promised to do.

Some days later Broker Carter told him to buy C. & D. for advance of ten points, and he bought 1,000 shares on margin as usual.

The stock was then going at 72.

Three days later it reached 80.

"I guess I'll let it go at that," he told Carter. "Eight thousand dollars in the hand is worth ten or twelve thousand in the bush."

"All right," said the broker, "you're the doctor."

He sold Sid's shares at 80 5-8, and an hour afterward the price fell with a rush to 75.

That afternoon he walked right into his father's office.

"How much do you suppose I'm worth now, father?" he said to Mr. Davenport.

"Why, been making another one of your hauls?"

"Yes. Just cleaned up \$8,000 today."

"The deuce you did. You're going some, young man."

"That's what I'm in business for. My capital now amounts to \$20,000, and a few hundred extra. That isn't so bad for an ex-messenger."

"You are certainly running in luck, Sid. It's only about a couple of weeks ago that you made money out of a tip that Mr. Hodge gave you."

"That's right. Want to sell me an auto?"

"No. Walking is good enough for boys of your age."

Sid didn't do anything in the market for two weeks, and then he bought 1,000 shares of C. & O. one morning at 83, just to get into the swim again.

It was a pretty good stock and it seemed likely to go up a point or two from the general trend of the market.

At two o'clock C. & O. had gone up a point and three-eighths.

He concluded to sell at that as he would make a little over \$1,000, which he regarded as a pretty good day's work.

Accordingly he returned to Carter's office and told the cashier to sell his stock.

"So soon?" said that gentleman.

"Yes, sir. I'm a thousand dollars ahead now. If I hold on I may lose it by tomorrow," he answered.

So his shares were sold and he added about \$1,100 to his capital.

Sid was now accustomed to his new method of making a living and he did not find time hang heavy on his hands any more.

A month passed away during which he made several quick deals, cashing in at a profit of from fifty cents to \$3 a share.

As he worked on a thousand share basis all these small profits counted up, so that one day he reported to his father that he was worth something over \$30,000.

He found a summons at home that day requiring his presence in Hackensack at the trial of Mother Moses.

The trial would come off three days later, so the next morning he called on Mr. Hodge and showed him the document he had received from the public prosecutor's office.

"I received a similar one," said the operator.

"I supposed you did. I'll call Thursday morning and we'll go over together."

On the day in question they appeared in court as witnesses against the old woman.

Sid was the only really important witness, as he alone had witnessed the murder.

His testimony was plain and straightforward, and left no doubts in the minds of either the judge or the jury and accordingly the hag was convicted.

On the following week she was sentenced to death.

She was never executed, for one morning she was found dead in her cell.

CHAPTER XV.

DRIVEN TO THE WALL.

Sid had been so lucky in the market that he believed that things were sure to come his way right along.

He forgot that luck turns sometimes when least expected.

With about \$31,000 of ready money at his disposal he was always on the lookout to raise that sum to \$50,000.

One day he saw in the newspapers the report that a certain independent traction company was about to be acquired by the Northern Traction Trust.

If this report was true the small company's stock was sure to boom as soon as the deal went through.

Sid started out to investigate, but he found he couldn't learn much on the subject that interested him.

He saw, however, that the stock of the independent company, known as the B. & T. Traction, was beginning to rise, and taking that as a good sign he bought 3,000 shares of it, fully expecting to make \$20,000 out of the deal.

Sid, however, thought he knew it all, and would buy the 3,000.

The shares were bought at 40 and a few days afterward they were up to 43.

"You can't make \$8,000 easier than by getting out now," said Carter.

"Don't you worry, I'll come out all right. I'm going to make \$20,000 out of this deal," said the confident Sid.

"I hope you do, but I have my doubts about it. You can't tell what is going on behind this advance of B. & T. I won't take any stock in it. I wouldn't be surprised to see it drop any moment."

Several days elapsed and B. & T. Traction continued to rise slowly and finally reached 45.

Once more Carter suggested that the shares be sold, but Sid wouldn't have it.

"You'll clear \$15,000," said Carter.

"If it goes up two points more sell me out," was Sid's answer.

B. & T. Traction, however, didn't go up two points more.

It hung around 45 3-8 for two days and then something happened.

The bottom fell out of it and down it went to 35 in no time.

In half an hour Sid's profits of \$15,000 in sight melted away, and with it went half his marginal deposit, or \$15,000 more.

It happened that Sid did not come down town till noon that day, and he was paralyzed when he saw what had happened.

"Well, what are you going to do now?" asked Carter. "You wouldn't take my advice, so you see what you've got up against."

"If I sell now I'll lose \$15,000," said Sid.

"You surely will," replied the broker. "And if you don't sell you are liable to lose the other \$15,000."

"I'll hold on," said Sid.

"You've got a good nerve," replied Carter.

"Yes, nerve is my strong point," laughed Sid.

"I believe you. That was a nervy feat of yours to try and snatch that lighted bomb from the crank's hand the day you saved Brown from death. Holding on to stock in the face of disaster requires another kind of nerve."

"Yes, I suppose so," said Sid.

That afternoon B. & T. Traction recovered to 38.

By holding on Sid had saved \$9,000, and if he sold now he would only lose \$6,000.

Carter advised him to get out, and thank his stars that luck had turned a bit in his favor.

"I shall hold on," said Sid, with grim determination.

"All right. You're the doctor. I hope you'll come out all right."

Next morning B. & T. took a sudden drop to 31, and that put Sid on the ragged edge.

Only half a point stood between him and the end of his tether.

Sid was practically driven to the wall, for he didn't have enough money left to meet a call for the smallest margin.

He wished most sincerely now that he had taken Carter's advice and sold out when he could have made a profit of \$15,000.

He even wished he had sold out the afternoon before and put up with a loss of \$6,000.

In that case he would still be worth \$25,000, and that amount looked bigger than usual to him that morning.

He had heard about well-to-do traders being ruined, in an hour and forced to make an assignment, and he was in a position to realize how they felt after the market had gone against them.

He couldn't expect any assistance from his father, for Mr. Davenport had only a few thousand saved up and he would not be apt to risk it in the stock market.

He knew Carter couldn't help him out of his scrape, for his business was in such a shape that he would have to protect himself.

There was only one person he could apply to and that was Mr. Hodge.

He could easily see him through and Sid believed he would do it.

So the boy rushed around to his office only to find that the operator had just gone out.

"When will he be back?" he inquired.

"Couldn't tell you," replied the operator's clerk.

"I suppose you don't know where he went?"

"I do not."

"That settles it, I guess," thought Sid, as he started for the door. "My goose is nicely cooked. What will Daisy say when I tell her?"

His hand was on the door when it was opened and the girl stood before him.

"Sid! You here! I'm so glad to see you," she cried eagerly.

"And I'm glad to see you," he replied, with a rueful smile.

"What's the matter, dear? Seems to me you don't look happy this morning," said the girl.

"Well, I'm not very happy. I'm in the hardest kind of luck," replied Sid.

"I am so sorry. What is the matter?"

"Caught in the market. I've got every cent of my money, \$30,000, up on a traction stock, and the bottom has fallen out of the price so badly that I am practically cleaned out."

"How much money do you need?"

"I ought to have enough to put up an additional five per cent. margin—that would amount to \$15,000."

"Come into father's private room and I will see if I can find him by telephone," she said. "I know he expects to call on Mr. Dashiway this morning, and he may be there."

The girl got Mr. Dashiway on the wire and found that her father was not at his office.

"Too bad. I wanted to see him on very, very important business."

"I am very sorry. Nothing that I could do for you, I suppose?"

"Will you lend me \$15,000 until you see my father?"

"Fifteen thousand!" exclaimed Mr. Dashaway in surprise.

"Yes. I must have it right away to save a friend of mine from losing twice that amount, every cent he has in the world, in the stock market."

"Will my check answer?"

"I suppose so."

Daisy hung up the 'phone.

"I've got the money, Sid," she cried, in an animated tone.

"You dear, good girl!" cried Sid, gathering her in his arms and kissing her several times.

"Gee! I wish that check would get here," he cried, earnestly.

"It's on the way, dear," she replied encouragingly.

"It may arrive too late."

"I hope not."

The last quotation, 30 5-8, kept dancing before Sid's eyes.

The minutes passed and still no more came out.

But he couldn't tell when the next transaction would be pulled off at the Exchange, and unless it went at the same price, or higher, he was done for.

Daisy ran to the door and held it open in expectation of the arrival of Mr. Dashaway's messenger.

At last the corridor door opened and a boy came in.

"Are you from Mr. Dashaway?" exclaimed Daisy.

"Yes," replied the boy. "I've got a note for Miss Hodge."

She almost snatched the envelope out of the boy's hand, tore it open and pulled out the check, which was to her order for \$15,000.

She drifted back into the room.

"Here it is, Sid," she cried, excitedly, holding it out to him.

"It's made out to your order. Endorse it right away," he cried.

She ran out to the clerk's desk, for her father's was closed, seized a pen and wrote her name across the back of it.

Sid had followed her out, and the moment she had written the last letter he grabbed the check, hastily blotted it and with the words "I'll be right back," darted out of the office and made for Carter's office at a speed he never surpassed when a messenger himself.

Some minutes later he bounced into Carter's office.

"Mr. Carter in?" he asked the cashier.

"No. Over at the Exchange."

"Well, here's a check for \$15,000 to hold in B. & T. as which have dropped nearly to the limit."

"I'm afraid you're too late, Davenport," said the cashier.

"Too late," gasped Sid.

"Yes. B. & T. is down to 30 4-8, and Mr. Carter has probably already sold you out under the rule."

"Great Scott! I hope not. I must see him. I'll take the check over to the Exchange and give it to him personally, if you won't accept it."

"I'd like to, but I have no authority to do so under the circumstances."

Sid grabbed the check and made a bee line for the Exchange.

When he got there he sent an attache to look for Carter and bring him out.

In a few moments the broker appeared.

"Have you sold me out yet, Mr. Carter?" asked Sid, excitedly.

"No, but I'll have to do it, because your stock is down to 30, and as it looks as if it was going lower I can't afford to hold it. I warned you what the consequence would be if you persisted in holding on to this stock."

"I know you did, and the slump has driven me to the wall, but at the last minute a good friend came to my rescue. Here is a check from a Mr. Dashaway made out to Daisy Hodge's order, and she has endorsed it payable to me. I'll endorse it and turn it over to you as additional margin."

"I'll take it," said Carter. "It will probably see you through."

"I hope it will," replied Sid.

He went to a desk and endorsed the check, making it payable to Broker Carter, and then he returned to Hodge's office where Daisy was awaiting his return.

He told her that the check had saved him, and she was delighted.

B. & T. Traction went down to 27 that day, but before the Exchange closed it recovered to 32.

On the following day it went up to 35, and the day after to 40.

By the end of the week it was going at 47 and Sid sold out, and after all made a profit of \$20,000, which he never would have done but for his opportune meeting with Daisy in her father's office.

Sid never forgot that lesson in Wall Street speculation, and thereafter was more cautious in his dealings, never venturing over half of his capital at one time.

Two years afterward, when he was worth \$100,000, he asked Mr. Hodge for the hand of his daughter Daisy, and was not turned down.

Today Sid is a wealthy young man, and a successful broker, but he still remembers his strenuous youthful experience in B. & T. Traction when he was driven to the wall.

THE END.

Read "JOHNNY THE PARCEL BOY; OR, THE LAD WHO SAVED THE FIRM," which will be the next number (255) of "Fame and Fortune Weekly."

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GOOD STORIES.

The British have had heaps of trouble in Siam to make the natives understand that the world is round, instead of flat. Indeed, the native teachers keep on teaching the children that it is flat, and when argued with they reply: "If it isn't flat why do the mountains stand up as they do, instead of rolling down hill?"

The great value of the steel car as a protection to passengers in the event of collision was demonstrated in a recent clash of two trains in the Hudson tunnel. There was no such telescoping as would probably have occurred with wooden cars, and the injuries were merely such as resulted from the passengers being thrown down by the shock of collision.

More than five centuries ago the corporation of London acquired from the crown a forge for which it promised to pay an annual rent in its products. Although the forge was demolished in a riot during the reign of Richard II., 1377-1399, and was never restored, the rent is still punctually paid every October. Last autumn, on the appointed day, the City Solicitor went to the office of the King's remembrancer and made the following proclamation: "Oyez, oyez, oyez. Tenanats and occupiers of a certain tenement called the Forge in the parish of St. Clement Danes, in the county of Middlesex, come forth and do your service." The City Solicitor then solemnly counted six horseshoes and sixty-one nails.

Queer things often happen in the great bird world. More than three years ago a farmer living in Shasta County, California, set out a number of small steel traps to catch gophers that were playing havoc with his carrot crops. One day while looking after these traps, the rancher chanced to see a very big yellow hawk swoop down on one of the traps. The bird was caught sure enough, and while it was struggling to free itself from the trap, the slender wire chain was torn from the fastening, and away the hawk flew, carrying with it the trap and chain, both dangling to the left foot. The farmer just considered that he had lost both his trap and chain, and gave no further thought to the little incident. However, very recently a farmer living in Sacramento County, more than 300 miles from where the rancher had lost his trap, shot and killed a very large yellow hawk recently that was after some of his chickens. Securely attached to this hawk's left leg was a No. 3 steel trap and more than a yard of small chain. Beyond all doubt this was the very same bird that had carried off the other rancher's trap three years before. All around the

sharp teeth of the trap a large fleshy callous place had grown, making quite a big lump. This excrescence had rendered the hawk's left talon perfectly helpless and useless in capturing its prey. But with all the painful sufferings of the bird through three years, and its crippled condition, this hawk had managed to secure its prey, and live about the same as any other predatory feathered creature. The farmer had doubtless performed an act of mercy in placing the bird out of its sufferings.

JOKES AND JESTS.

"She's the most popular member of our card club." "What's the matter, hasn't she been able to win a prize yet?"

He—Would you rather be beautiful or clever? She—Beautiful, I think. You see, there are lots of stupid men, but only a few blind ones.

Tragedian (out of an engagement)—Ah, sir! I would fain play Hamlet for one night and die! Manager (Philistine)—Well, on those terms, we'll see if it can't be managed.

Mrs. Destyle—No, I couldn't abide the neighborhood; it was so unfashionable, you know. Mrs. Beneder—And you could think of no other way to improve it than by moving?

Hobbs—Alas! I fear that boy of mine is going to be a newspaper humorist. Dobbs—Why do you think so? Hobbs—A school essay he wrote began, "The natives of Iceland are a cold and distant people."

Winter Visitor (in Florida)—I should love dearly to go sailing, but it looks very dangerous. Do not people often get drowned in this bay? Waterman—No, indeed, mum. The sharks never let anybody drown.

Jinkers—That man is the most insufferable lump of conceit that ever trod the earth. I wish he could be elected President of the United States. Winkers—You do? Why? Jinkers—The newspapers would make him sick of himself.

Traveler (in dining car, fast express)—Waiter, these eggs are too soft. Waiter—S'prised to heah dat, sah. Traveler—They were taken out of the hot water too soon. Waiter—Well, sah, I'll put 'em back an' let 'em boil another mile, sah.

The family next door had a new dog, and small Ethel was admiring it. "Be careful," said the lady, "or he may bite you." "Why should he bite me?" asked Ethel. "Because he doesn't know you." "Well," queried the little miss, "why don't you introduce us?"

In a certain county of Arkansas a man named Walters was put on trial for stealing a watch. The evidence had been very conflicting, and as the jury retired the judge remarked suavely that if he could afford any assistance in the way of smoothing out possible difficulties he would be most happy to do so. Eleven of the jurors had fled out of the box, but the twelfth remained, and there was on his countenance an expression indicating great perplexity. "Is there any question you would like to ask me before you retire?" asked his honor, observing the juror's hesitancy. The man's face brightened. "Yes, your honor," he replied eagerly. "I'd like to know, your honor, whether the prisoner really stole the watch."

SIX HOURS WITH DEATH

By D. W. Stevens.

Monsieur Lapine, the celebrated aeronaut, direct from Paris, had come to the small New England city of Montfort by special solicitation of the managers of the Agricultural Fair, to make an ascent in his mammoth balloon, the La Belle France, for the edification of thousands of sightseers.

A balloon ascension, as is well known, draws as few other attractions can, for the public mind is sufficiently morbid to pander its tastes to that which involves the greatest risk, the utmost sensation, or the most frightful of casualty.

Monsieur Lapine was a connoisseur in the art of aeronautics, having made many ascensions and experienced many hair-breadth escapes. But he little dreamed that he was upon the eve of the most fearful adventure of his life.

At the appointed hour the grounds were crowded to witness the great ascension. The gentlemanly managers of the fair were there, so also were the representatives of the press.

One of these, Mr. Henry Herbert, was to accompany the aeronaut in his skyward trip. Herbert was a handsome, accomplished young fellow and noted for his bravery. When rallied by his friends, he replied coolly and laughingly:

"As I cannot ever expect to attain a position so high heaven again, why, dear friends, should I not avail myself of this grand opportunity?"

A few shrugged their shoulders and said that this was bravado, and that at the last moment he would weaken. But here, right on time, was the young newspaper man, as cheerful and unconcerned as if merely going out to dine.

Monsieur Lapine stood by the basket adjusting the barometer. He was a large, powerful-framed man, attired in heavy boots, a fur cap and a pea-jacket, although it was a day in August.

"It will be cold enough up there," he said with a knowing nod of the head. "Trust me for that. I have traveled beyond the zenith too many times not to make sure of being comfortable. Turn off the stop-cock, Monsieur Audrey. She is too full now."

Indeed it seemed likely, for the La Belle France was swaying and tugging at her bonds like a mad creature. Her silken sides were distended to the fullest, and all was ready for the ascent.

The people all crowded nearer, agog with excitement. The balloon was heavily ballasted, and Monsieur Lapine had turned to address the audience, when he felt a touch upon the arm.

A boy, slender and of a dark type of feature, stood before him. In looks, dress and everything this boy was undoubtedly French. He looked imploringly up into Monsieur Lapine's face.

"Oh, father, you must let me go with you. Please let me go."

"Stop!" exclaimed Monsieur Lapine sharply. "You are foolish, Pierre. I have told you a stranger, a newspaper man, is going with me. I bid you go home to mother. Obey me!"

Monsieur Lapine spoke authoritatively to his son, and little Pierre's eyes filled with tears of disappointment. His stern father almost relaxed at this, but turned away resolutely and muttered:

"He will make an aeronaut yet. Noble boy, he has his mother's face and heart. Ah, 'tis too soon to let him begin. I must not give way."

The crowd listened eagerly to Monsieur Lapine's address. So

intent were they, in fact, that a lithe form as it slipped into the basket and hid beneath a pile of empty sand bags was not noticed.

The aeronaut's remarks finished, the crowd cheered and men stood by ready to sever the guy ropes.

Monsieur Lapine bowed low and gave Herbert the preference in entering the balloon. Then both men stood upright in the frail carriage and waved their arms to the people.

A few quick blows with the ax and the ropes were severed. A beautiful sight ensued. Into the air like a mighty bird the balloon leaped and soared heavenward in arrow-like flight.

Up, up until village and wood, river and plain seemed a vast map spread far below. Steeples and house tops were but dim specks in the landscape.

The day was beautiful and the sun's rays made the upper stratum of atmosphere much warmer than the aeronaut ordinarily found it.

As a consequence the rarefied air thus acted upon had a tremendous effect upon the gases in the balloon, swelling the vast bag until it was much beyond its ordinary dimensions. Up and up it went with the increased pressure, until the barometer marked a tremendous altitude, much over two miles.

Herbert, the newspaper correspondent, was cool, even jovial, and ventured to gaze over the edge of the basket. But the tremendous view made him dizzy, and he drew back with a shiver.

Monsieur Lapine was always in his element when in the air.

It might have been said, and not without truth, that upon this subject the French aeronaut was almost a maniac. He could not ascend too high or attempt any feat too daring.

Two miles from the earth is as far as the general run of balloonists care to ascend. But Monsieur Lapine tossed out bags of sand and kept the barometer constantly recording greater altitude.

Thus far Herbert had made no remarks, but had watched the aeronaut intently. He now ventured to speak.

"Monsieur Lapine!" he exclaimed. "We must now be more than two miles from the earth."

The aeronaut glanced at the barometer.

"Yes," he replied, with a peculiar smile. "We are nearly three miles in the air. And"—glancing over the edge of the basket—"we have drifted westward six miles. At this rate we shall, in three hours, be more than one hundred miles from Montfort. Fortunately we shall land on the dry land and not the sea."

"Thank heaven!" exclaimed Herbert, with a long deep breath.

"What, getting nervous, are you?" asked the aeronaut with twinkling eyes. "You would never make an aeronaut."

"I am well aware of that," replied Herbert. "But you have no fear, Monsieur Lapine. Yours are nerves of steel."

"Ah," said the aeronaut, with a strange smile. "I would be a sorry aeronaut to give way to that. Tut, tut! that would never do."

"Indeed I would give much to be on the earth now."

"Nonsense. We are at a beautiful height now. See those clouds? We shall soon be in them. We will not see the earth then."

"Those clouds!" exclaimed Herbert in horror. "Why, Monsieur Lapine, that is a storm approaching us."

"A storm!" exclaimed the aeronaut impatiently. "How absurd. In any event you shall see how La Belle France will defy the elements."

Something in Lapine's voice struck a chill to the correspondent's heart. His face turned pale as death. There was a recklessness, an utter disregard of consequences upon Lapine's part

which satisfied him that the aeronaut was laboring under a temporary hallucination.

Lapine climbed up the basket stays and fairly shrieked with delight at sight of the approaching clouds. He waved his arms and swung his cap. The severe tension of the responsibility of the occasion, and the effect of the rarefied air upon his brain had been too much for its equilibrium. In a flashing instant Herbert saw and comprehended this.

Words cannot depict his sensations. Too late he regretted having come. There was no doubting the fact that Monsieur Lapine was temporarily insane. Three miles in the air in a car of a frail balloon, wholly at the will and caprice of an irresponsible man. What more frightful position could be imagined?

It is an historically recorded fact that human hair has turned from black to white in a few hours of suffering and terror. So terrible was the sensation experienced by Herbert, the correspondent, that it was a wonder his did not turn in that instant.

Like one acting in a nightmare he calmed his nerves, and gazing nearer perceived into Lapine's eyes. The look in them, the cold, hard glare, and reckless glare, called all doubt in his mind.

"My heavens!" was the exclamation which leaped from his lips. "Oh, my heavens!"

Then he clenched his hands, fiercely, tightly, and bending forward caught the deranged man's gaze.

"Hold, Monsieur Lapine. We must not meet that cloud. It is a tornado and will drive us to destruction."

Lapine shrugged his shoulders.

"What would you do?"

"Open the valve and descend, or throw out ballast and mount above it."

"Impossible!" cried the fevered man. "The fates have decreed that we must enter that cloud, and enter it we will. Ha! I'll show you how the La Belle will defy the elements."

Awful desperation seized Herbert at that moment. He set his teeth and hissed between them:

"You are gone mad. You may have no regard for your own life, but remember you have no right to throw mine away."

Had Monsieur Lapine been in his right mind, he could not have failed to recognize the logic of Herbert's words; but his overtaxed brain had succumbed to the action of the rarefied atmosphere, and he was temporarily insane.

Herbert knew little of the manner in which the balloon should be handled, but recognized the valve rope and made an effort to grasp it.

Monsieur Lapine, with the cunning of the maniac, saw this move, and caught the correspondent in his arms. A deadly struggle followed.

Lapine was a giant in strength and hurled his opponent to the bottom of the basket. Herbert was stunned and laid there, partly unconscious and unable for a time to act. The balloon began to oscillate with the action of the approaching tornado and Lapine settled down into one corner of the basket with the frenzy of the madman to await the coming of what seemed certain death.

Herbert came to sufficiently to recognize his surroundings, when a scene was enacted before his eyes which astounded him.

Suddenly a pile of logs in one corner of the basket was thrown aside, and a little form leaped out. The effect upon Lapine was tremendous.

A handsome, dark-featured boy had revealed himself, though now his face was pale with terror. But Lapine in an instant had seized him by the throat with a savage cry.

"Mon Dieu! Pierre, where have you come from?"

"Father, oh, my father!" cried the boy, wildly, imploringly,

"don't give way to the madness. We shall all die. You would not kill Pierre. Save me, my father, oh, save me!"

The effect of the boy's impassioned words upon the mad aeronaut was electrical. He hesitated, a strange light shone in his eyes, and he passed a hand across his brow.

"Mad—am I mad?" he muttered in a bewildered, constrained way. "Has the fit seized me again? Heaven help me to throw it off. Pierre, am I mad?"

It was a mighty effort on the part of a strong man sorely afflicted. The sight of his idolized boy, the passionate appeal had burst across his overwrought, clouded brain like an inspiration. A great shudder passed over his giant frame, and he cried, wildly:

"I will overcome it, Pierre, for you, my boy, for you."

Reason asserted itself over the dread malady for the instant, and Lapine hastily tossed out several bags of sand. Up went the balloon, and the tornado swept beneath. But its cool breath fanned new life and strength into the afflicted aeronaut, who now lay in the bottom of the car. It had been a mighty, Herculean effort, but he had overcome the mania. It left him, however, weak and prattling as a simple child.

Herbert, the correspondent, who was now all sympathy for the suffering man, held his head and laved his brow with water.

The danger of the storm had now passed, and Pierre pulled upon the valve rope to descend to the earth. To the horror and surprise of all, it would not work.

"The valve is broken!" gasped the lad. "We are lost indeed!"

"Is there no hope that the gas will exhaust itself in time and allow the balloon to descend?" Herbert asked.

With glassy, upturned features the boy scrutinized the vast sphere of silk, and said:

"The pressure of the rarefied air is so great that we can float but a few hours longer, when it will burst and we shall be dashed three or more miles to the earth. We are lost!"

"Lost!" exclaimed Herbert in a hollow voice as he staggered to the edge of the basket. "If that is so why prolong the agony? I am tempted to cast myself down."

Indeed the inspiration of madness was upon him for an instant. But only for an instant, then Pierre was by his side eager and excited.

"There is only one chance!" he gasped. "It is a desperate chance."

"Then let me take it."

"No."

The boy threw off his coat and shoes. Before Herbert had fairly divined his purpose he had begun to ascend the network of the balloon.

It was a desperate chance. Great heavens! how desperate the act itself was. Only the strongest nerve could stand that ordeal.

The next instant down the network came Pierre as agile as a monkey. His face shone. The valve was freed.

"We are going down," he cried joyfully. "We are saved."

The La Belle France alighted safely in a corn field more than a mile from Montfort. Monsieur Lapine was for weeks under the care of physicians afflicted with dangerous brain fever.

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- " " FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY, Nos.....
- " " Ten-Cent Hand Books, Nos.....

Name.....Street and No.....Town.....State.....